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THE
DRAMAS OF SOPHOCLES

RENDERED IN

ENGLISH VERSE

DRAMATIC AND LYRIC

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THE
DRAMAS OF SOPHOCLES

RENDERED IN
ENGLISH VERSE

DRAMATIC AND LYRIC

BY

SIR GEORGE YOUNG

BART, M.A., LL.D., FORMERLY FELLOW OF TRINITY
COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.

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Ἄτθις δ' οἶα μέλισσα, πολυπρήωνα Κολώνην
λείπουσ', ἐν τραγικαῖς ἤδε χοροστασίαις
Βάκχον καὶ τὸν Ἑρωτ', ἐγέραιρε δὲ θεῖος ᾄοιδος
εὐμελίη· τόδε γὰρ Ζεὺς ἔπορεν Σοφοκλεῖ.

HERMESIANAX, *Eleg.* 57, restored (see p. xxvii).

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CONTENTS

	PAGE
PREFACE	vii
ANTIGONE	I
Notes	60
AJAX	63
Notes	123
ELECTRA	127
Notes	195
OEDIPUS TYRANNUS	199
Notes	270
TRACHINIAE	275
Notes	327
PHILOCTETES	331
Notes	397
OEDIPUS COLONEUS	399
Notes	482
FRAGMENTS OF THE LOST DRAMAS	485
I. Attic Legends	488
II. Miscellaneous Legends	498
III. Story of Athamas	504
IV. The Argonauts	505
V. Story of Telephus	507
VI. Story of Perseus	511
VII. Wars of Argos and Thebes	513
VIII. Legends of the House of Atreus	517
Y. A.	b

	PAGE
IX. Stories from the Cycle of the War of Troy: 1. The Cypria	518
X. The same continued: 2. The Iliad	526
XI. The same continued: 3. The Little Iliad and the Taking of Troy	527
XII. The same continued: 4. The Returns of the Heroes .	532
XIII. The same continued: 5. The Odyssey	538
XIV. The later life of Ulysses	541
XV. Satyric Plays	542
XVI. Unknown Dramas	545

PREFACE

OF the principal authors of Greek and Roman antiquity Sophocles perhaps offers the most tempting field to a translator, from the high standard of excellence maintained in all the extant remains of his work, and from the manageable dimensions within which, unfortunately, they are comprised. This version has been for many years a companion of my leisure hours. Perhaps, if I had foreseen when I began it how much attention my poet was to receive from contemporary translators, I should in modesty have directed my own steps elsewhere ; for since that date have appeared in print, besides single plays by various hands, complete versions of the seven dramas by Professor Plumptre of King's College, now Dean of Wells, by Professor Lewis Campbell of St Andrews, and by Mr Whitelaw of Rugby School. Each of these publications, in turn, has caused me to hesitate whether I should ever publish this work ; and yet, much as I have myself enjoyed in them, and much as I have learnt from them, I cannot think that either of them has so occupied the ground as to render further intrusion upon it unwarrantable. They all appear to me to labour under one serious defect ; that of being difficult of perusal, apart from the original, as English verse. Their authors, with whom in this respect must be classed Professor D'Arcy Thompson, who in 1862 included in his *Ancient Leaves* a somewhat prosaic rendering of the *Ajax*, and Professor Kennedy, whose *Œdipus Tyrannus* (published 1882) is a marvel of fidelity to the Greek—all,

with hardly an exception, have approached their task as teachers of Greek, rather than as writers of English. There is, in consequence, in their lines I do not say too much of the Greek scholar, but not enough of the English writer. The exception, if any, is the version by the Dean of Wells. In spite of the too evident haste in which it was composed, it remains, in respect of poetical merit, as was to be expected from so graceful a writer of original verse, the best. On the other hand, although so largely corrected in a second edition as to have been, in many parts, rather rewritten than altered, it still lies open to criticism for defects in scholarship¹; while a certain monotony and want of finish have prevented it from maintaining the high rank, even in popular estimation, to which, at its first appearance, it was welcomed by many, by myself among the number. The scholarship of the other versions mentioned I do not venture to criticize; it is rather in their ideal of poetical translation, in their choice of style, or in their dealings with our common English speech, that I find matter of objection. In particular, the form of blank verse adopted by all, Dr Plumptre not excepted, appears to me inadequate; being for the most part idyllic rather than dramatic in type, and where dramatic, either showing but little study of good models, or study only of that most dangerous of models, the *Samson Agonistes*. In none, moreover, have adequate pains been taken with the Choruses; although, considering the difficulty of recommending to modern taste this characteristic element in Greek drama, it would seem that here especially is it incumbent on a translator to do his best.

By earlier labourers in the same field, I notice that in 1849 appeared three versions of single plays. That of the *Ajax*, by the late G. Burges, is only amusing as a specimen of pedantry. Dr Donaldson's *Antigone* is of unequal merit; it is often happy, indeed it is sometimes too ingenious for beauty; on the whole he may be said to have taken more

¹ *Ex. gr. cf.* Aj. 1228; O. C. 484, 972, 1263.

pains, and to have reached a higher standard of excellence, where he is excellent, than any of his rivals. A graceful version of the *Œdipus Tyrannus* by Sir Francis Doyle excites the wish that he had continued his career as a translator. Mr E. D. A. Morshead has more recently translated the same play with success.

The still earlier translators, Franklin, Potter and Dale, are generally admitted to have failed, as the later translators seem to me to fail, in producing anything that can be considered a standard English version of Sophocles. Franklin rather paraphrases than translates; Potter is more faithful, but is prosaic and clumsy; Dale, with a better ear for verse, offends by the tasteless insertion of epithets, and by his pomposity of style.

I will take as an example the small but very Sophoclean part of Eurydice, *Antigone* ll. 1183—1191 (p. 52). This speech (except as to one word, ἀνασπαστοῦ) presents no linguistic difficulty, and is remarkable for its pathos, its directness, its clear indication of character, and the picturesque value of the words employed.

ὦ πάντες ἄστοι, τῶν λόγων ἐπησθόμην
 πρὸς ἔξοδον στείχουσα, Παλλάδος θεᾶς
 ὅπως ἰκοίμην εὐγμάτων προσήγορος·
 καὶ τυγχάνω τε κλῆθρ' ἀνασπαστοῦ πύλης
 χαλῶσα, καί με φθόγγος οἰκείου κακοῦ
 βάλλει δι' ὧτων· ὑπτία δὲ κλίνομαι
 δείσασα πρὸς δμῳαῖσι, κάποπλήσσομαι.
 ἀλλ' ὅστις ἦν ὁ μῦθος αὔθις εἶπατε·
 κακῶν γὰρ οὐκ ἄπειρος οὖσ' ἀκούσομαι.

Franklin is careless, and reads like a translation from Corneille rather than from Sophocles; but it is remarkable that he alone has avoided the dramatic mistake of representing Eurydice to be already well aware of all that has happened.

O citizens, as to Minerva's fane
 E'en now I went, to pay my vows, the doors
 I burst, and heard imperfectly the sound
 Of most disastrous news which touched me near.

Breathless I fell amidst the virgin throng ;
 And now I come to know the dreadful truth ;
 Whate'er it be, I'll hear it now ; for oh !
 I am no stranger to calamity.

Potter is more literal, but his verse is graceless, and his English is disfigured by harsh inversions.

Ye citizens of Thebes, I heard the voice
 Of rumour, as I came forth, at the shrine
 Of Pallas, suppliant, to address my vows ;
 The bars that closed the gates it chanced my hand
 Was opening ; at that instant the report
 Of ill, my house affecting, reached my ear.
 With terror struck, in my attendants' arms
 I sunk, and life forsook my fainting frame.
 But tell me all ; repeat the mournful tale ;
 In woes not unexperienced I shall hear.

In the next version, which is Dale's, observe the intruding adjectives "*chaste* Athena", "*firm* bars", "*whispered* voice", "*severest* woes" ; there is moreover a tone of exaggeration about the whole, which makes it the least pleasing to me of any.

Your conference we have heard, O citizens,
 As we came forth, departing to prefer
 Our suppliant prayers in chaste Athena's shrine.
 While yet my hand was loosening the firm bars
 Which close our palace-gates, the whispered voice
 Of some domestic evil met mine ear ;
 Trembling I sunk among my maids supine,
 With sudden terror lifeless. Yet again
 I bid thee tell thy tale ; for I shall hear it
 Not unexperienced in severest woes.

The Dean of Wells comes next, with a rendering which is surely a great improvement on any of the preceding. A little more accuracy, and a little adjustment, would have rendered the following poetically, though not, I think, dramatically, unexceptionable.

My friends,
 I on my way without, as suppliant bound
 To pay my vows at Pallas' shrine, have heard

Your words, and so I chanced to slip the bolt
Of the half-opened door ; when lo ! a sound
Falls on my ears of evil near at hand,
And terror-struck I fell in deadly swoon
Back in my handmaids' arms ; yet tell it me,
Tell the tale once again ; for I shall hear
By long experience disciplined to grief.

Professor Campbell is unequal ; his last line is very good, and his last but one a failure ; in other respects he is spirited and correct, but falls short of the Dean in taste, and of Mr Whitelaw in fidelity.

People of Thebes, the tidings met mine ear
As I was coming forth to visit Pallas
With prayerful salutation. I was loosening
The bar of the closed gate, when the sharp sound
Of mine own sorrow smote against my heart,
And I fell back astonished on my maids
And fainted. But the tale ? tell me once more ;
I am no novice in adversity.

Mr Whitelaw writes in the same prosaic style as Potter, but improves upon him, both in scholarship and in vigour.

Good townsmen all, your conference I heard
As to the doors I came, intending now
Of Pallas to entreat her heavenly aid.
Even as I loosed the fastenings of the gate
That opened wide, there smote my ears a word
Of sorrow all my own ; backward I swooned,
Surprised by terror, in my maidens' arms ;
But tell me now your tidings once again,
For not unlearned in sorrow I shall hear.

Donaldson's strong point, the firm finish of his lines taken separately, is well brought out in the passage.

O all ye citizens, I heard the tidings,
As I was coming forth to bear my greeting
Of supplication to the Goddess Pallas.
Just as I loosed the bolt of the closed door,
Tidings of my own sorrow pierced my ears,
And horrified, I fell into the arms
Of these my followers, and my senses fled.
Whate'er the story was, tell it again.
To hear of sorrow is not new to me.

Two or three obvious blemishes in these lines might with care have been removed, and in that case this rendering would have been by a good deal the best, in my judgment, of the series.

Whatever be the conclusion arrived at, as to the sufficiency in point of style, and as to the merits in detail, of previous translations, the publication at the present day of a seventh attempt undoubtedly constitutes a challenge to criticism, and no indulgence need be expected, on the score of good intentions. It is allowable to a challenger, however, to select the shield that he will touch. Besides the special deficiencies above noticed, or exemplified, I seem to myself to find, in all the existing translations, a want, first, of dramatic spirit in their dialogue, and secondly of poetic fidelity in their lyrical parts. Fidelity I believe I may claim to have preserved, in the Choruses as in the rest; but whether fidelity has been reconciled with the genius of English poetry, and whether dramatic energy has been attained, without sacrifice of dignity, I will not venture to anticipate. My hope is that at worst my rendering may be found more readable, while not less accurate, than any other.

I have departed from the common practice of my predecessors in one important respect, which it is due to them to acknowledge. Instead of abstaining from consulting the work of others, I have made use of it to the fullest legitimate extent; though it was not my practice to look at any other translation of a passage, before completing my own first draft. That is to say, all of the recent and much of the earlier versions have been compared, line by line, with the original; and every passage has been carefully revised, in which the rendering of a predecessor put me out of conceit with my own. In the great majority of these instances my work has been amended, not by appropriating that of another, but by devising something which, at the time, at all events, pleased me better than either. Setting aside cases of coincidence, there have not been borrowed more, in single lines and half lines, than about twenty in all, from all sources,

whether verse or prose; together with, perhaps, a score of single words. These obligations have been scrupulously acknowledged in my notes. My whole debt, in the shape of assistance to understand the original, and avoid errors, is not so easily acquitted; and I desire especially to mention in this connexion the instruction I have derived from the recent editions of Professors Jebb and Campbell.

The order in which the seven plays have been printed may possibly be considered an innovation. But it is merely that of the most ancient lists, with the *Antigone* and *Œdipus Coloneus* transferred to their more probably correct places, in the order of production. From these I suppose them to have been removed, with questionable taste, so as to follow the *Œdipus Tyrannus*, in order that the Theban story might be read as far as possible consecutively; and perhaps also in order to countenance the fiction that these plays were component parts of an Æschylean Trilogy. Sophocles loses greatly, if his dramas are not studied with some reference to the date at which they were composed. The *Philoctetes* and *Œdipus Coloneus* represent a phase of art removed by more than a full generation from that of the *Antigone* and *Ajax*. To mention one circumstance only out of many; in the three later plays alone is the influence of Euripides discernible; and much less in the two last than in the *Trachiniæ*, written in all probability when that influence was at its height.

Questions of text are not often of importance to a translator. I have therefore contented myself with that of Dindorf (*Poetæ Scenici Græci*, 1851, and the small Oxford edition of 1847), as being the text most widely circulated in England. All the places have been indicated in notes where a reading of better authority has been preferred, provided the sense of the translation is thereby materially affected. In only four instances (*Antig.* 130; *Ajax* 966; *Œd. Tyr.* 575; *Trach.* 145) did I venture on a conjectural emendation of my own; in each case the alteration of text is very slight, but that of meaning considerable; and the sense in each appeared to me to gain greatly by the change. It was with more relief to my

apprehensions than disappointment to my vanity, that I subsequently found I had been, in every instance, anticipated; in the first passage by Mr Blaydes, in the second by Eustathius, in the third I am happy to say by the MSS. themselves, which appear to me to have been altered by Brunck without sufficient warrant, and in the fourth by Mr Paley. A trifling suggestion as to the last word of fr. 33 is rendered superfluous by Bentley's emendation of a different reading.

The fragments of lost plays have not hitherto been included by any translator except the Dean of Wells; who has given a liberal selection from them, very successfully rendered. Some of the best have also been translated by Professor D'Arcy Thompson, and by Professor Campbell, among their miscellaneous writings. In my version I have endeavoured to invest these relics with some further interest, through the short notices, chiefly drawn from Welcker (*Die Griechischen Tragödien mit Rücksicht auf den epischen Cyclus*, Bonn, 1839), of what is either known or plausibly conjectured of the plot and characters of the drama from which each was taken. Since no approximation can in this case be made to a chronological order, I have followed Welcker's example in classifying the plays mentioned according to subject; but I have not adopted his arrangement, which depends too exclusively upon his comparisons with the Homeric cycle.

The *Œdipus Tyrannus*, as it appears in these pages, was issued separately in 1887, at the time when the play was being produced on the Cambridge stage by the University Greek Plays Committee. The suggestion made in my note on line 445, that Œdipus should then retire, so as not to hear the revelation of Tiresias which follows, "Tiresias, from his blindness, remaining unaware of the fact," was tried by the actors on that occasion, as well as the traditional arrangement; and the preference has been given, by many good judges, to the innovation. As I saw the play performed Œdipus made his exit somewhat too abruptly. On a larger stage this would easily have been rectified.

I shall here mention the principal canons which, by degrees, I established for myself in translation, and by which I have been guided in revision. I do not claim to have discovered anything that is important in the art; indeed most of what follows is rather the restatement of old principles, some of which seem to me to have been obscured by the fashion of the time.

I. First of all stands the hard and yet self-rewarding duty of always taking pains. It is not enough to make careful versions of favourite passages, and to fill up the intervals with a rapidly written sketch. Where the diction of Sophocles is least poetical, the purport is often dramatically most interesting. When his dramatic interest begins to flag, the chances are that he supplies a new source of interest, through his rapid and glowing rhetoric. It is hard on the whole to say whether his more or his less obviously important passages demand the greater care in a translator, or better repay his pains. There is, however, a special reason for fidelity in dealing with passages where, owing to their celebrity or beauty, it may be assumed that the reader will be the more anxious to know as exactly as possible what the author intended to convey. Such passages it has been my practice to carry about with me, turning them in various ways, and so gradually approaching nearer to a good rendering. Several of the Choruses have been rendered twice, some three times, in different metres, before I could satisfy myself that they might pass. On an average, each play was rather more than two years in hand; and the whole has been repeatedly revised, during the ten years which have elapsed since its completion.

II. Secondly, although the best of translations can hardly be mistaken for an English original, either ancient or modern, yet none the less must every translation into English be recognizable above all things for an English work. To this end the classic forms of English literature should be strictly observed. It is not permitted to a translator to innovate. For instance, in the department of metre, Dean

Alford in his Homer, and Mr Robert Browning in his *Agamemnon* of Æschylus, attempted an eleven-syllable line, previously unknown, except as a variation of the decasyllabic; but even Mr Browning marred a great book in consequence; and Alford is unreadable. Similarly it is not for the translator, as a rule, to be introducing new forms of diction, or new canons of taste, it is already hard enough for him to conciliate acceptance for what is exotic in his author, without raising additional difficulties, through his own indolence or caprice. Græcisms, and vulgarisms, and quaintnesses of all sorts, are alike condemnable; hard as it is to eliminate them altogether. English archaicisms are dangerous indulgences; even the use of "thou" for "you," and the corresponding verb forms, should rarely be employed, and only for good reason assignable. In this respect I am aware that the common practice of translators is against me. Led by the influence of the Bible translators of King James, who followed those of the time of Henry VIII., they overlook the fact that the Elizabethan poets, after trying both usages, rejected the older one for the newer, except only where a special diction was required, more impassioned, more ceremonious or more peremptory than usual. A double usage, in their case, was rendered possible by the change in common parlance, which was then actually in progress. This change was obviously promoted by the difficulty of dealing in harmonious dialogue with the harsh second persons singular of past tenses. Such forms as "attemptedst" and "banishedst," "roset" and "raisedst," or (still worse) "soar'dst" and "bor'st" are offences to the ear, for which the convenience of retaining both singular and plural pronoun-forms is an insufficient compensation. There is something to be said, in opposition to rigid purism, in favour of the free use of both forms, as the ear may prescribe; but the alternation should not, of course, be carried into extremes. Always to use "thou" produces upon my ear the effect of falsetto; on the other hand there are passages in which to use "you" is too familiar for tragedy.

For similar reasons proper names should be given in their English dresses; the Greek diphthongs, u's, k's, and terminations in -os being still as much, in my opinion, mere barbarisms in an English book, as when they were first imported, not from Greece, but from Germany. "Aias" and "Poluneikes," in our Roman characters, appear to me not so much Greek, as queer; and such fantastic combinations of letters as "Klutaimnēstra" and "Oidipous" stand, if for anything, for sounds not so near to the most probable authentic pronunciation of the names, as are the more popular forms in common use among ourselves. I have not used Latin correlatives for the names of Greek deities: but I have allowed myself, as English forms, "Proserpine," and "Jove" for the unmanageable "Zeus".¹ I have used my full liberty as a writer of English in dealing with proper names, especially in their adjectival forms; also in throwing back the accent (as in "Etéocles," "Cádmean," "Spérchius," and once—*metri gratiâ*—"Párnasus") thereby following, as I consider, the best traditions of the English language. The same traditions are my justification for an occasional abbreviation, such as "Amphitrite" or "Polydore" pronounced as a trisyllable. In all such matters English rather than Greek rules are to be observed. It is better to do as Shakspeare and Dryden did before us, than to disfigure English verse with Greek spelling, or to spoil English accent out of deference to Greek quantity. The story of Gibson's hat-box (see his *Life* by Lady Eastlake, p. 233) may be commended to all critics who, like his Greeks, have an unreasoning respect for "the number *Three*."

¹ In justification of this I may observe that the Greeks themselves evidently disliked the forms of the declined cases of Zeus, and took refuge in Dios, Dia, by preference. The whole subject is a minor matter, in my judgment; and I here enter my protest against the exaggerated importance attached to it by some Classical periodicals, which did me the honour shortly to notice my version of the *Œdipus Tyrannus*. If I err, I err in company with the whole body of first class English literature, Mr Browning excepted, and three-quarters of Mr Grote.

III. I have taken it for granted that verse may best be represented by verse, as prose by prose. To this rule there may be exceptions in other departments of literature : thus a prose version of Homer is most pleasing to some, and the Prayer-book version of the Psalms out-sings all metrical versions. But prose drama, of the serious kind, has never been effectually naturalized among us ; and for this reason, if for no other, a prose translator of Sophocles is attempting the inadmissible. With regard to metre, for the dialogue the great Elizabethan models are not to be ignored. The verse of Fletcher is the easiest, perhaps, among the greater masters to be imitated ; that of Massinger is perhaps nearest to the antique ; but that of Shakspeare, in his central or later central period, is at once of more general application, more rich in variety, and more pleasing. It has also secured, what is of great moment to an imitator, a succession of poets who have shown the way to imitate it. Take for instance such pieces of finished versification as the speech of Brutus—

“No, not an oath,” etc. *J. C.* Act II. Sc. I,
or of Cyril in the second book of the *Princess*,

“Should I not call her wise, who made me wise?” etc.

The principal characteristics of such verse as this I understand to be its nervousness, and its rapidity. By virtue of the first, the peculiarities of accent and sound contribute, more than in any other verse, to enhance the meaning ; by virtue of the second it is simply the most readable poetry in the language.

The representing each line of the original by a line of translation, neither less nor more, I regard as a superstition. The stateliness of the effect produced, where the meaning of a passage marches with the line, is a point, no doubt, to be carefully observed ; so also is the emphasis given to a phrase, by making it exactly coincident with a line. But the English decasyllable is shorter by two places than the Greek trimeter Iambic ; and even if we allow for the shorter

forms of words in English, I have generally found that at least eleven lines, containing a smaller number of syllables than ten lines of Greek, are necessary fully to convey their meaning, unless an undue number of monosyllables is employed. I have allowed myself, in a much greater degree than the original, the liberty of ending and beginning speeches in the middle of the line. In English drama this practice is legitimate : in Greek it is exceptional. But there seems no reason for introducing a Greek limitation, of no beauty in itself, into a purely English measure. In the case of the single line dialogues, which form so characteristic a feature of Attic drama, the breaking of the line has been peremptorily condemned by some critics. To insist upon this in all cases appears to me a "hat-box." If the meaning of the original can only be given by breaking the line, I have not scrupled to break it. This is surely better than to resort to obscure compressions, harsh inversions, and omissions of important words. Nevertheless, where possible, I allow that the form, as well as the meaning, should in this particular be preserved. This is especially desirable, where a formal tone in the dialogue is made more emphatic by the formality of the verse.

For the Choruses, if they stood by themselves, I think a prose rendering might more easily be tolerated, than for the dialogue. I still remember with pleasure the eloquent renderings of those in the *Bacchæ* of Euripides with which the late Master of Trinity used to adorn his lectures on the play. But prose interludes, in poetic drama, do not give the effect of song. What, after all, was the artistic value of the Choric element in representation? At the conclusion of each scene, in the absence of a curtain to descend upon the stage, the attention of spectators was held in suspense, not wholly diverted from the action, by the singing of an impassioned ode, or by the declamation of a brilliant *scena*, generally reproducing the motive of the last Act, and adorned with all the available resources of instrumental music and the dance. Our English poetic literature is as rich as the Greek

in the varied music of stately measures, suitable to render all the modes of the Attic chorus. The selection of a stanza is a matter of taste. For models I have resorted freely to the poets; and in this respect I must especially refer with gratitude to Mr Swinburne, whose beautiful innovations in lyric metre have often started me afresh, when brought fairly to a standstill through poverty of invention. In the absence of knowledge how the Greek actors recited and sung, it is a waste of labour to try and reproduce the lilt of the original. To do this with accuracy is impossible in a language on which no poet has as yet engrafted a complete system of prosody for quantitative verse. To preserve a correspondence between strophe and antistrophe, and a studied relation, oftener of contrast than of resemblance, between one strophic system and another, is essential, if the translation is to represent a Greek chorus, and not a rhapsody. Rhyme I have almost always employed, for the simple reason that to write lyric blank verse tolerably is so very much more difficult. A few of the shorter passages of lyrical interlude have been suffered to lapse into ordinary blank verse, distinguishable only from the regular dialogue by peculiarities of rhythm and diction.

Among the Greek metres the anapæstic or marching measure holds a place by itself. The number of experiments I have tried for it is a point that needs apology; but I may plead that Sophocles uses it in passages varying widely in sentiment and tone. The late Professor Conington, in his *Agamemnon* of Æschylus, boldly maintained that the so-called English anapæstic tetrameter, a jingling ballad line, to the tune of

“*You are old, father William, the young man said*”—

was as nearly as possible its equivalent. But Mr Matthew Arnold in his *Fragment of an Antigone* bestowed upon us a rhymeless anapæstic measure, quantitative as well as accentual, and with a reversed accentuation, as much more beautiful in itself, as it better represents, to my ear, the

tread of the original. This metre I would gladly have employed throughout, but for its great difficulty. I notice that Mr. Arnold permitted himself often to neglect quantity, and occasionally to change the accent. Such license, in feebler hands, extinguishes the music. The stricter form I have perforce adopted is hard to manage. I have used it, however, for the short overtures, which in the earlier plays precede the entrance of new characters upon the stage. The old rough tetrameter of Ralph Roister Doister, employed by Shakspeare in his early comedies, has appeared to me a better substitute for the Greek trochaic verse, than the so-called English trochaic. The conclusion of the *Œdipus Tyrannus* must, I think, be treated lyrically.

IV. In transcribing from one language into another, the right order of procedure appears to be, first of all, to take into account the entire purport and value of the passage, including both sound and sentiment, together with the notions to be conveyed. Next in order of consideration stand the particular words for which it is desirable to give a separate equivalent. I have not thought it incumbent on me always to render the same Greek word by the same English one. This principle has been adopted by the revisers of the Bible, but is not warranted by their predecessors, or by any of the best English translators in verse. In the third place comes to be considered the order of the words; often of importance hardly inferior to that of the words themselves; and in the last place, and first of all to be sacrificed, where sacrifice is necessary, the syntax. In laying this down as a canon of translation I feel it necessary to guard against my being misunderstood. I claim to have paid, in the first stage of the work, as much attention as any of my predecessors to the niceties of grammatical construction¹. In the result I believe I am as close to the

¹ Perhaps I may be allowed to specify, as one instance of the pains that have been taken, my *general* avoidance of the common confusion between the aorist tense on the one hand, and the perfect, or Sophoclean perfect (ἐχ^ω with the aor. part.) on the other.

letter of Sophocles as Potter and Mr Whitelaw, and much closer than Professors Campbell and Plumptre; though I cannot cope, in this respect, with Dr Kennedy. But I think, when the translator comes to composition, that it is his duty to postpone the grammatical form of the sentence to its expressional value; and to seek rather the best English rendering of the latter, than the English phrase which most nearly corresponds to the former. I would not willingly neglect a single significant particle; even the Greek order and construction I would follow, if it makes as good English as any other; but it is better to turn a whole clause inside out, exchanging the places of the nominative and accusative, and substituting a passive for an active voice, or turning adjectives into adverbs, and redistributing the meaning between noun and verb, than to employ crude and canine English. Perhaps in a majority of cases, certainly in many, the closest rendering is not the most faithful.

With regard to obscurities in the original, I conceive that it is a translator's duty always to make sense, never forgetting that his author was presumably a man of sense. In desperate places a note is allowable, but an ambiguity never. Grammatical imperfection is not to be reproduced; but a grammatical peculiarity may sometimes have a dramatic intention, and in this case should not be neglected. The alternative meanings, which some scholars find so plentiful in Sophocles, would be untranslatable even if authentic, and I incline, always, to doubt their authenticity.

V. The last of my canons, and not the least important, is that poetry should always be rendered by poetry. Beauty must be given to the transcript of a passage, which the author intended should produce the effect of beauty. Moreover, so far as the forms of our language and the genius of our literature will allow, this beauty must be, not a substitute, but the same that was intended. Imagery and pathos must be carefully treasured; the pace at which the original moves must be observed; strong words, repetitions and surprises must be marked; a studied order in the sentence, or even

a studied languor in the diction, if it have a dramatic or poetic value, must on no account be ignored. I heartily repudiate the doctrine of compensation, whereby, when beauty has been missed, other ornament is imported, to make up a general effect. There is no play of Sophocles which has not its purple passages: and many of the fragments are flawless gems. On the other hand there are a very few places, in which some softening of the literal expressions is necessary. For instance, all the extant translations of *Œd. Tyr.* 1275-8, Franklin's excepted, produce on me the effect of a most painful burlesque.

If to be offensive is high treason in a translator, to be prosy is petty treason. All the same, he must not be scared out of fidelity by the fear of not being poetical enough. He will find it vain to attempt to satisfy the many, intoxicated as they are with the beauties of romanticism, accustomed to expect colour and verbal decoration in every page, almost in every line of verse. But the truly Sophoclean beauties of English literature—Pericles mourning over Thaisa—Artevelde rebuking the envoys—have not lost their charm. The closer he keeps to his text, the better the chance he will have of touching, here and there, one of those deeper notes, that thrill the heart, as with poetical magic.

For purposes of revision I have found it necessary that a translation should be put away for some time, and then taken up afresh. I suppose that it would be possible, in the case of an author like Sophocles, to go on for a hundred years revising, once in every ten years or so, and each time getting nearer to an adequate representation. But a day must come when the resulting heap of filings is small, in comparison with the labour expended. It is then time either to publish the result, or to put it behind the fire. There are those who would advise, in all cases, the latter course; arguing that no poetical translation from the classics, as a literary work, can by possibility have a title to exist. To this doctrine the works of both the greater and

lesser masters in the art, of Pope and Shelley, as of Conington and Calverley, supply a sufficient refutation. In the same spirit did a great art-critic once advise us to commit to the flames all our best line-engravings from the paintings of *Rafaele* or *Correggio*. These are rhetorical enhancements of a good argument, the argument that imitative or reproductive art has not the same value—has not even the same kind of value—as original work. The fallacy becomes obvious, if the argument is applied, as it should be in consistency, to the part of the performer in music, or of the actor in drama. Even in sculpture the process of production is largely mechanical and imitative.

Poetical translation, indeed, may be compared in many respects to the copying by a carver of an antique. Before him stands the immortal original, cast, as it were, in imperishable bronze; but the secret of the material is lost, and the mould is broken. The translator brings his modern language, exquisite in refinement, but deficient in plasticity; he places his marble by the side of the metal, and searches for the statue hidden in the stone. The earlier stages of the work are easy; freely he hews at the mass, guiding his chisel by the eye or pointer, trusting to the mechanical accuracy of his scholarship, or to the first impressions of his poetic insight. Many carry their work no further forward than this stage. Soon however the true craftsman is seen to hold his hand; he falls to comparing and measuring, to experimenting, and again correcting. Sometimes he cuts too deep; the result is bald and mean. Sometimes, in striving to be literal, he has lost the spirit; he finds his material inadequate or traitorous, too scant of imminent shadow, or too absorbent of the relieving light. Sometimes again he is tempted to chase, as it were, the drapery of his figure with modern ornament; beautiful, it may be, in itself, or acceptable for associations' sake; but on second thoughts to be discarded and condemned, as repugnant to the style and features of the model. The moments are rare when, in happier mood, he seems to attain to something of

inspiration ; when the verse becomes ductile, moulded to the shape and informed with the sentiment of the original ; when he is able to say with confidence, "so might my author have expressed himself, if English, not Greek, had been his vehicle." When all is done, there will remain only an outline, a faint adumbration, of what was embodied by the master. Yet in spite of shortcomings, to the loyal workman there will come a conviction that his labour was not wasted. Through his means some home-keeping lovers of ideal beauty will discern, as Keats did, beyond the ages, those charming graces which first prompted his endeavour. By the help of the copy which he places in their chamber some, whose ranging days are over, will be assisted to recall the lineaments of the master-piece which they visited in youth across the sea.

I do not propose to detain my readers from Sophocles by any lengthened criticism or comment. All that I might have cared to indicate, either of beauties not certain to be recognized, or of popular mistake in the apprehension of character, I have tried to embody in my translation. I incline to that view of the art of Sophocles which regards him as before all things an artist, and only incidentally as a teacher or preacher ; which I should rather say does not so regard him at all. This is not however the same thing as to hold that he is indifferent to rightness and wrongness of view, in any of the great provinces of human conduct. On the contrary, I recognize that he, more than either of his great rivals, appreciated the poetic value of rectitude, and delighted in contrasting it with the ugliness of error. *Æschylus* classes his personages as heroes, and the enemies of heroes ; as persons with whom, or against whom, we are expected to take part. His hero indeed may be defective, and his villain may have excuse ; but we are not allowed to see the one doing anything to imperil our moral approval, or the other anything to conciliate it. Like the good and bad characters of a fairy tale, such personages are apt to become insipid ; and they are in fact saved from this, dramatically

speaking, only by the interposition of another element, an element beyond the region of character, their exposure to the stress of supernatural agency." Euripides, who represents, not the succession to the art of Sophocles, but a contemporary revolt against it, a revolt which, whatever degree of vogue it obtained at the time, was in literature after all a failure, shows himself generally hostile to religious feeling, and as nearly as possible indifferent to morality. His great resources for exciting interest, apart from esteem, are the pathos of natural affections, and the tendency to compassion (rather than passion) for what is maidenly in humanity. But these, when tested in drama after drama, finally fail to sustain our sympathy. Sophocles, as a poet inferior to Æschylus, and hardly superior to Euripides, as a dramatist soars far above them both. To him first it was given to sound the depths and explore the shoals of human nature. He paints for us real men and women, though on the heroic scale; the good are faulty, the bad in some respects are amiable; he does not ignore that goodness is amiable, or that faults are bad things in themselves; but he does not make it the business of his poetry to proclaim or emphasize the fact. Moralists therefore, and politicians, and even theologians, may read him with edification, and draw texts from him for their most serious discourses; but let them not appropriate him, or impute to him their systems. For my own part, I have found in these dramas at one time the expression of a simple piety, at another a protest against popular superstition; here praise of a docile acceptance of authority, there a vindication of the necessity of rebellion; a high appreciation of the nobility of duty, and a full appreciation, also, of the excellence of pleasure. In one word, Sophocles is a dramatist. He is an artist in human character.

His back-grounds are the sunlight, the sea, the mountains, and the cultivated surface of the earth. His material is the most flexible and sonorous of languages. His style is like Ionian drapery, faultless alike where it clothes, and

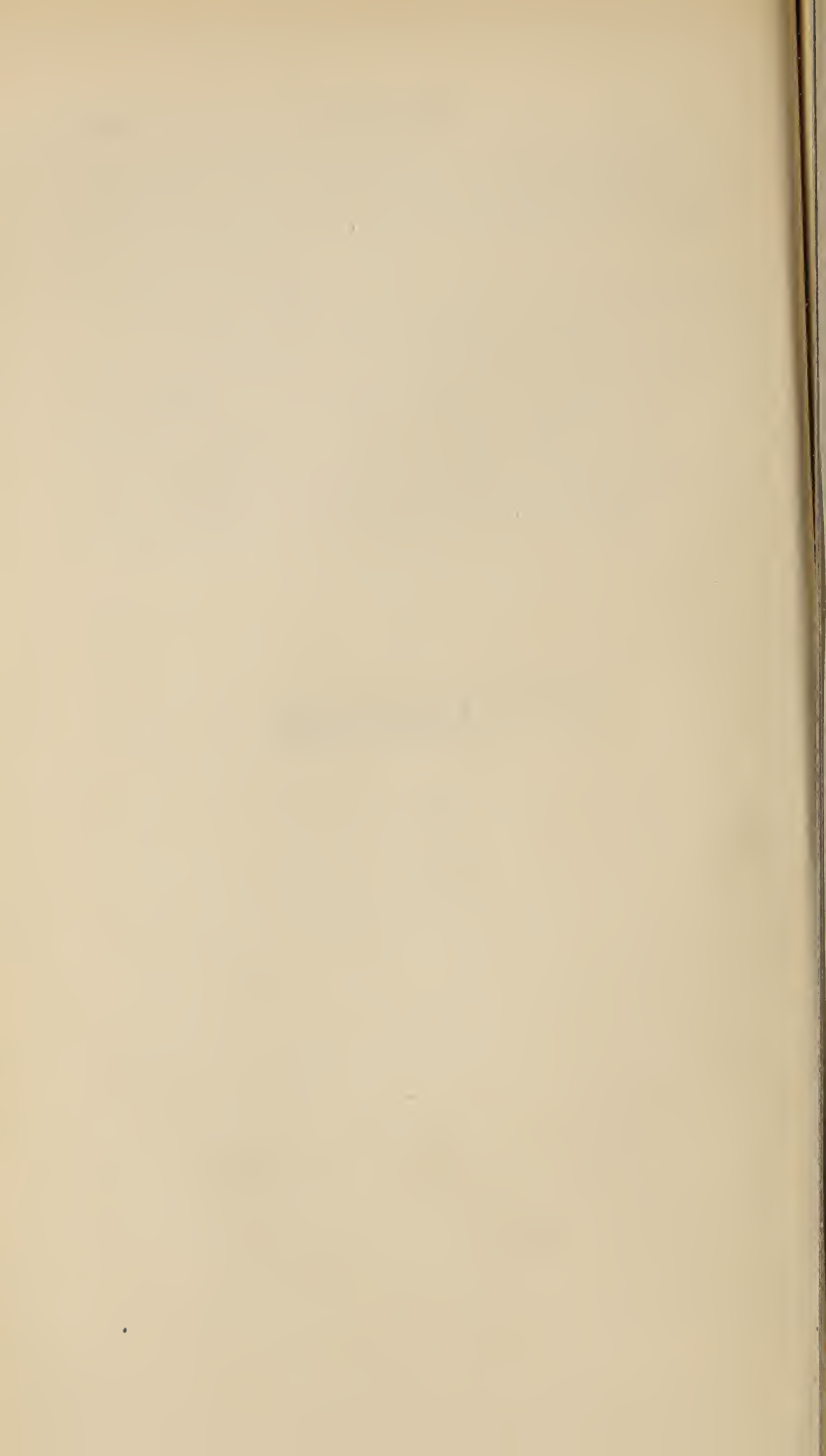
where it reveals ; but better suited to dignified movement than to energetic action, and perhaps most beautiful in complete repose.

One note I have to add, by way not so much of addition to the little that is known of Sophocles, as of protestation against an injury which has been done to his memory. Athenæus has preserved to us, in part, a spirited elegiac poem, by Hermesianax of Colophon, a writer of the third century B. C., in which are enumerated several instances of poets and philosophers who have exemplified the power of Love. Among them Sophocles finds place ; but so far from confirming the scandalous stories with which (as in the case of every other celebrity) Athenæus labours to besmirch his name, the poem in his case contains no biographical allusion, but rises, for once, into not unmusical praise of his transcendent literary merit. Unfortunately the quatrain which refers to Sophocles is sadly defective, the second hexameter concluding with a mass of unintelligible syllables (*ἀγείραιθειαρειδος*), while one half of the following pentameter is lost. Under these circumstances the perverted ingenuity of a certain class of commentators—one of them a would-be translator of Sophocles—has been at pains to fill up the gap with unworthy names and items, raked out of the unsavoury heap which Athenæus swept together, in which this poem, and many yet brighter jewels, lie imbedded. Thus what should have been a tribute to the personal blamelessness as well as to the genius of Sophocles has been unfairly wrested into a confirmation of libels on his character. Meanwhile the verses as they stand admit of a better, more natural, and entirely innocent construction ; they may easily be restored by conjecture ; and I have accordingly made bold to take them, with a suggested restoration, for my motto, in the desire to do tardy justice, at once to Sophocles and to his eulogist. My suggestion, it will be perceived, is largely due to Ruhnken, who first pointed out the reference to the Homeric Hymn

to Hermes, l. 429; it has also been partly anticipated by Weston; of what remains, the form $\epsilon\upsilon\mu\epsilon\lambda\acute{\iota}\eta$ will be found in the same Hymn, l. 325, as it has been most credibly emended by Hermann.

The figure of Triptolemus on the cover is taken from the fine contemporary Vase (British Museum, E. 137; *Monumenti Inediti*, Vol. ix., Pl. XLIII.) signed by Hiero, representing the Gods and Heroes connected with the Eleusinian Mysteries. It has been copied for me by Mr Alfred Hodgson, under the kind superintendence of Mr A. S. Murray, to whom I am further indebted for help in compiling my notes on *Elect.* 746, and *Fr.* 678.

ANTIGONE



ANTIGONE

PERSONS REPRESENTED

ANTIGONE, }
ISMENE, } *daughters of Œdipus, late king of Thebes.*

CREON, *brother to Jocasta, late queen of Thebes, Captain-general of the army, and successor to the throne.*

A Sentinel.

HÆMON, *son to Creon, betrothed to Antigone.*

TIRESIAS, *a seer.*

A Messenger in attendance on Creon.

EURYDICE, *wife to Creon.*

The CHORUS is composed of Senators of Thebes.

Guards; Attendants; a Boy leading Tiresias.



ANTIGONE

Scene, before the Royal Palace at Thebes. Time, early morning. Enter ANTIGONE and ISMENE.

ANTIGONE

Ismene, dear Ismene, sister mine,
Do you perceive how Heaven upon us two
Means to fulfil, before we come to die,
Out of all ills that grow from Œdipus—
What not, indeed? for there's no sorrow or harm,
Occasion of dishonour or disgrace,
Such as I have not seen, among my griefs
And yours; and now again, what is it they say
Our Captain-general has proclaimed but now
To the whole city? Did you hear and heed?
Or are you blind, while pains of enemies
Are passing on your friends?

10

ISMENE

Antigone,
To me no tidings about friends are come,
Pleasant or grievous, ever since we two
Of our two brothers were bereft, who died
Both in one day, each by the other's hand.
And since the Argive host in this same night
Took itself hence, I have heard nothing else,
To make me happier, or more miserable.

ANTIGONE

I knew as much ; and for that reason I made you
Go out of doors—to tell you privately.

ISMENE

What is it ? I see you have some mystery.

20

ANTIGONE

What ! has not Creon to the tomb preferred
One of our brothers, and with contumely
Withheld it from the other ? Eteocles
Duly, they say, even as by law was due,
He hid beneath the earth, rendering him honour
Among the dead below ; but the dead body
Of Polynices, miserably slain,
They say it has been given out publicly
None may bewail, none bury, all must leave
Unwept, unsepulchred, a dainty prize
For fowl that watch, gloating upon their prey !
This is the matter he has had proclaimed—
Excellent Creon ! for your heed, they say,
And mine, I tell you—mine ! and he moves hither,
Meaning to announce it plainly in the ears
Of such as do not know it, and to declare
It is no matter of small moment ; he
Who does any of these things shall surely die ;
The citizens shall stone him in the streets.
So stands the case. Now you will quickly show
Whether you are worthy of your birth or no.

30

ISMENE

But O rash heart, what good, if it be thus,
Could I effect, helping or hindering ?

40

ANTIGONE

Look, will you help me ? will you work with me ?

ISMENE

To what end ? What do you mean ?

ANTIGONE

Help me to lift

The body up—

ISMENE

What, would you bury him?
Against the proclamation?

ANTIGONE

My own brother
And yours I will! If you will not, I will;
I shall not prove disloyal.

ISMENE

You are mad!
When Creon has forbidden it?

ANTIGONE

From mine own
He has no right to stay me.

ISMENE

Alas, O sister,
Think how our father perished! self-convict—
Abhorred—dishonoured—blind—his eyes put out 50
By his own hand! Then she, who was at once
His wife and mother, with a knotted noose
Laid violent hands on her own life! Then thirdly
Our two unhappy brothers in one day
Each on his own head by the other's hand
Wrought common ruin! We now left alone—
Do but consider how most miserably
We too shall perish, if despite of law
We traverse the behest or power of kings. 60
We must remember we are women born,
Unapt to cope with men; and, being ruled
By mightier than ourselves, we have to hear
These things—and worse. For my own part, I will ask

Pardon of those beneath, for what perforce
I needs must do, but yield obedience
To them that walk in power; to exceed
Is madness, and not wisdom.

ANTIGONE

Then in future
I will not bid you help me; nor henceforth,
Though you desire, shall you, with my good will, 70
Share what I do. Be what seems right to you;
Him will I bury. Death, so met, were honour;
And for that capital crime of piety,
Loving and loved, I will lie by his side.
Far longer is there need I satisfy
Those nether Powers, than powers on earth; for there
For ever must I lie. You, if you will,
Hold up to scorn what is approved of Heaven!

ISMENE

I am not one to cover things with scorn;
But I was born too feeble to contend
Against the state.

ANTIGONE

Yes, you can put that forward; 80
But I will go and heap a burial mound
Over my most dear brother.

ISMENE

My poor sister,
How beyond measure do I fear for you!

ANTIGONE

Do not spend fear on me. Shape your own course.

ISMENE

At least announce it, then, to nobody,
But keep it close, as I will.

ANTIGONE

Tell it, tell it!

You'll cross me worse, by far, if you keep silence—
Not publish it to all.

ISMENE

Your heart beats hotly
For chilling work!

ANTIGONE

I know that those approve
Whom I most need to please.

ISMENE

If you could do it! 90
But you desire impossibilities.

ANTIGONE

Well, when I find I have no power to stir,
I will cease trying.

ISMENE

But things impossible
'Tis wrong to attempt at all.

ANTIGONE

If you will say so,
I shall detest you soon; and you will justly
Incur the dead man's hatred. Suffer me
And my unwisdom to endure the weight
Of what is threatened. I shall meet with nothing
More grievous, at the worst, than death, with honour.

ISMENE

Then go, if you will have it: and take this with you,
You go on a fool's errand! *Exit* ANTIGONE.

Lover true
To your beloved, none the less, are you! *Exit.*

Enter THEBAN SENATORS, as Chorus.

Chorus.

I. 1.

Sunbeam bright! Thou fairest ray
 That ever dawned on Theban eyes
 Over the portals seven! 100
 O orb of aureate day,
 How glorious didst thou rise
 O'er Dirca's streams, shining from heaven,
 Him, the man with shield of white,
 Who came from Argos, in armour dight,
 Hurrying runagate o'er the plain,
 Jerking harder his bridle rein;
 Who by Polynices' quarrellous prayer 110
 Uproused, like an eagle stooping in air,
 With a high shrill cry
 Came hurling at our dominion,
 All crested above with a horse's tail,
 All covered in mail,
 And clad with a snow-white pinion!

I. 2.

Yawning with many a blood-stained spear
 Around our sevenfold-gated town,
 High o'er the roofs he stood;
 Then, or ever a torch could sear 120
 With flames the rampart-crown—
 Or ever his jaws were filled with blood
 Of us and ours, lo, he was gone!
 Such clamour of war came surging on,
 Raised by the Dragon at his back;
 Such was the stress of the foe's attack;
 For Zeus abhors vainglorious boasts;
 And straightway as he beheld their hosts,
 Where on they rolled, covered with gold,
 Streaming in mighty eddy, 130
 Scornfully with a missile flame
 He struck down Capaneus, as he came
 Uplifting high his victory-cry
 At the topmost goal already.

II. 1.

Tantalus-like aloft he hung, then fell;
 Earth at his fall resounded;
 Even as, maddened by the Bacchic spell,
 On with torch in hand he bounded,
 Breathing blasts of hate.
 So the stroke was turned aside,
 Mighty Ares thickly dealing
 Others elsewhere, far and wide,
 Like a right-hand courser wheeling
 Round the goals of fate.

140

For captains seven at the portals seven
 Found each his match in the combat even,
 And left on the field both sword and shield
 As a trophy to Zeus, who o'erthrew them;
 Save the wretched twain, who against each other,
 Though born of one father, and one mother,
 Laid lances at aim—to their own death came,
 And the common fate that slew them.

II. 2.

But now loud Victory has returned at last
 On Theban chariots smiling,
 Let us begin oblivion of the past,
 Memories of late wars beguiling
 Into slumber sound.
 Seek we every holy shrine;
 There begin the night-long chorus;
 Let the Theban Boy divine,
 Bacchus, lead the way before us,
 Shaking all the ground.

150

Leave we the song: the King is here;
 Creon, Menœceus' son, draws near;
 To the function strange—like the heaven-sent change
 Which has raised him newly to power:
 What counsel urging—what ends of state,
 That he summons us to deliberate,
 The elders all, by his herald's call,
 At a strange unwonted hour?

160

Enter CREON, attended.

CREON

Sirs, for the ship of state—the Gods once more,
After much rocking on a stormy surge,
Set her on even keel. Now therefore you,
You of all others, by my summoners
I bade come hither; having seen you first
Paying due honour always to the throne
In Laius' time; secondly while Œdipus
Ordered the commonwealth; and since his fall,
With steadfast purposes abiding still,
Circling their progeny. Now, since they perished, 170
Both on one day, slain by a two-edged fate,
Striking and stricken, sullied with a stain
Of mutual fratricide, I, as you know,
In right of kindred nearest to the dead,
Possess the throne and take the supreme power.
Howbeit it is impossible to know
The spirit of any man, purpose or will,
Before it be displayed by exercise
In government and laws. To me, I say,
Now as of old, that pilot of the state
Who sets no hand to the best policy,
But remains tongue-tied through some terror, seems 180
Vilest of men. Him too, who sets a friend
Before his native land, I prize at nothing.
God, who seest all things always, witness it!
If I perceive, where safety should have been,
Mischief advancing toward my citizens,
I will not sit in silence; nor account
As friend to me the country's enemy;
But thus I deem: she is our ark of safety;
And friends are made then only, when, embarked
Upon her deck, we ride the seas upright. 190
Such are the laws by which I mean to further
This city's welfare; and akin to these
I have given orders to the citizens

Touching the sons of Œdipus. Eteocles,
 Who in this city's quarrel fought and fell,
 The foremost of our champions in the fray,
 They should entomb with the full sanctity
 Of rites that solemnize the downward road
 Of their dead greatest. Him the while, his brother,
 That Polynices who, returning home
 A banished man, sought to lay waste with fire 200
 His household Gods, his native country—sought
 To glut himself with his own kindred's blood,
 Or carry them away to slavery,
 It has been promulgated to the city
 No man shall bury, none should wail for him;
 Unsepulchred, shamed in the eyes of men,
 His body shall be left to be devoured
 By dogs and fowls of the air. Such is my will.
 Never with me shall wicked men usurp
 The honours of the just; but every one
 Who is friendly to this city shall, by me,
 Living or dead, be honoured equally. 210

I SENATOR

Creon Menœceus' son, we hear your pleasure
 Both on this city's friend, and on her foe;
 It is your sovereignty's prerogative
 To pass with absolute freedom on the dead,
 And us, who have survived them.

CREON

Please to see, then,
 What has been said performed.

I SENATOR

That charge confer
 On some one who is younger.

CREON

Of the body?
 Sentries are set, already.

I SENATOR

Then what else
Is there, besides, which you would lay on us?

CREON

Not to connive at disobedience.

I SENATOR

There's no such fool as to embrace his death. 220

CREON

Death is the penalty. But often men
Are brought to ruin, through their dreams of gain.

Enter a Sentinel.

SENTINEL

My lord, I will not say—"breathless with speed
I come, plying a nimble foot;" for truly
I had a many sticking-points of thought,
Wheeling about to march upon my rear.
For my heart whispered me all sorts of counsel;
"Poor wretch, why go, to meet thy punishment?"—
"Wretch, wilt thou tarry? And shall Creon hear the news
From others' lips? How shalt thou then not rue it?" 230
Out of this whirligig it came to pass
I hastened—at my leisure; a short road,
Thus, becomes long. Nevertheless at last
It won the day to come hither, to your presence;
And speak I will, though nothing have to say;
For I come clinging to the hope that I
Can suffer nothing—save my destiny.

CREON

Well—and what caused you this disheartenment?

SENTINEL

First let me tell you what concerns myself.
I do protest, I neither did the deed,

Nor saw it done, whoever 'twas who did it ;
Nor should I rightly come to any harm.

240

CREON

At all events you are a good tactician,
And fence the matter off all round. But clearly
You have some strange thing to tell?

SENTINEL

Yes. Serious tidings
Induce much hesitation.

CREON

Once for all
Please to speak out, and make an end, and go.

SENTINEL

Why, I am telling you. That body some one
Has just now buried—sprinkled thirsty dust
Over the form—added the proper rites,
And has gone off.

CREON

What say you? What man dared
To do it?

SENTINEL

I know not. There was no dint there
Of any mattock, not a sod was turned ; 250
Merely hard ground and bare, without a break,
Without a rut from wheels ; it was some workman
Who left no mark. When the first day-sentry
Shewed what had happened, we were all dismayed.
The body had vanished ; not indeed interred,
But a light dust lay on it, as if poured out
By one who shunned the curse ; and there appeared
No trace that a wild beast, or any hound,
Had come, or torn the carcase. Angry words
Were bandied up and down, guard blaming guard, 260

And blows had like to end it, remediless;
For each in turn stood culprit, none convict,
But all pleaded "not guilty." We were ready
Even to take up hot iron in our hands,
Or pass through fire, calling the Gods to witness
We were not actors, nor accessory
To any man who compassed it, or did it.
And so at last, when all our search proved vain,
There speaks up one, who made us, every man,
Hang down our heads for fear, having no power 270
To say him nay, or save ourselves from harm—
His burden was, this business must be carried
To you, without reserve. That voice prevailed;
And me, poor wretch, the lot condemns to get
This piece of luck. I come a post unwilling,
I well believe it, to unwilling ears;
None love the messenger who brings bad news.

I SENATOR

My lord, my heart misgave me from the first
This must be something more than natural.

CREON

Truce to your speech, before my wrath brims over, 280
Lest you be found at once grey-beard and fool!
To say that any guardian Providences
Cared for this corpse, is unendurable.
Was it by way of supereminent honour
For his good deeds, that they should give him burial,
Who came to burn their colonnades and shrines,
And waste their land and laws? Or do the Gods,
In your experience, honour the impious?
'Tis false. These orders from the first some people
Hardly accepted, murmuring at me, 290
Shaking their heads in secret, stiffening
Uneasy necks against this yoke of mine.
They have suborned these sentinels to do it,
I know that well. No such ill currency
Ever appeared, as money to mankind:

This is it that sacks cities, this routs out
 Men from their homes, and trains and turns astray
 The minds of honest mortals, setting them
 Upon base actions; this made plain to men
 Habits of all misdoing, and cognizance 300
 Of every work of wickedness. Howbeit
 Such hireling perpetrators, in the end,
 Have wrought so far, that they shall suffer for it.
 As sure as I still live to worship Jove,
 Know this for truth; I swear it in your ears;
 Except you find and bring before my face
 The real actor in this funeral,
 Death, by itself, shall not suffice for you,
 Before, hung up alive, you have revealed
 The secret of this outrage; that henceforth
 You may seek plunder—not without respect 310
 Of where your profit lies; and may be taught
 It is not good to covet all men's pay;
 For mark you! by corruption few men thrive,
 And many come to mischief.

SENTINEL

Have I leave
 To say a word, or shall I turn and go?

CREON

Cannot you see your prating tortures me?

SENTINEL

Pricks you how deep? In the ears, or to the spleen?

CREON

Why do you gauge my chafing, where it lies?

SENTINEL

Your heart-ache were the doer's, your ear-ache mine.

CREON

Out, what a bare-faced babbler born art thou! 320

SENTINEL

Never the actor in this business, then !

CREON

O yes, for money you would sell your soul !

SENTINEL

Plague on it ! 'tis hard, a man should be suspicious,
And with a false suspicion !

CREON

Yes, suspicion ;
Mince it as best you may. Make me to know
Who has done this, or you shall soon allow
Left-handed gains work their own punishment.

Exit.

SENTINEL

I wish he may be found. Chance must decide.
Whether or no, you will not, certainly,
See me returning hither. Heaven be praised
I am in safety, past all thought or dream !

330

*Exit.**Chorus.*

I. 1.

Much is there passing strange ;
Nothing surpassing mankind.
He it is loves to range
Over the ocean hoar,
Thorough the surges' roar,
South winds raging behind ;

Earth, too, wears he away,
The Mother of Gods on high,
Tireless, free from decay ;
With team he furrows the ground,
And the ploughs go round and round,
As year upon year goes by.

340

I. 2.

The bird-tribes, light of mind,
The races of beasts of prey,
And sea-fish after their kind,
Man, abounding in wiles,
Entangles in his toils
And carries captive away.

The roamers over the hill,
The field-inhabiting deer,
By craft he conquers, at will ;
He bends beneath his yoke
The neck of the steed unbroke, 350
And pride of the upland steer.

II. 1.

He has gotten him speech, and fancy breeze-betost,
And for the state instinct of order meet ;
He has found him shelter from the chilling frost
Of a clear sky, and from the arrowy sleet ;
Illimitable in cunning, cunning-less 360
He meets no change of fortune that can come ;
He has found escape from pain and helplessness ;
Only he knows no refuge from the tomb.

II. 2.

Now bends he to the good, now to the ill,
With craft of art, subtle past reach of sight ;
Wresting his country's laws to his own will,
Spurning the sanctions of celestial right ;
High in the city, he is made city-less, 370
Whoso is corrupt, for his impiety ;
He that will work the works of wickedness,
Let him not house, let him not hold, with me !

At this monstrous vision I stand in
Doubt ! How dare I say, well knowing her,
That this maid is not—Antigone !

Daughter of Œdipus !
Hapless child, of a hapless father ! 380
Sure—ah surely they did not find thee
Madly defying our king's commandments,
And so prisoner bring thee here ?

Enter Sentinel with ANTIGONE.

SENTINEL

This is the woman who has done the deed.
We took her burying him. Where's Creon?

I SENATOR

Here

Comes he again, out of the house, at need.

Enter CREON.

CREON

What is it? In what due season come I forth?

SENTINEL

My lord, I see a man should never vow
He will not do a thing, for second thoughts
Bely the purpose. Truly I would have sworn 390
It should go hard with me before I came
Hither, in prospect of your menaces,
By fury of which I was encountered then.
But since an unforeseen happy surprise
Passes all other pleasing out of measure,
I come, though I forswore it mightily,
Bringing this maiden, who was found in act
To set that bier in order. Here, my lord,
No lot was cast; this windfall is to me,
And to no other. Take her, now, yourself;
Examine and convict her, as you please;
I wash my hands of it, and ought, of right,
To be clean quit of the scrape, for good and all. 400

CREON

You have seized—and bring—her! In what way, and whence?

SENTINEL

Burying that man, herself! You know the whole.

CREON

Are you in earnest? Do you understand
What you are saying?

SENTINEL

Yes, that I saw this girl
Burying that body you forbade to bury.
Do I speak clear and plain?

CREON

How might this be,
That she was seen, and taken in the act?

SENTINEL

Why thus it happened. When we reached the place,
Wrought on by those dread menacings from you,
We swept away all dust that covered up
The body, and laid the clammy limbs quite bare, 410
And windward from the summit of the hill,
Out of the tainted air that spread from him,
We sat us down, each, as it might be, rousing
His neighbour with a clamour of abuse,
Wakening him up, whenever any one
Seemed to be slack in watching. This went on,
Till in mid sky the luminous orb of day
Stood, and the heat grew sultry. Suddenly
A violent eddy lifted from the ground
A hurricane, a trouble of the sky;
Ruffling all foliage of the woodland plain
It filled the horizon; the vast atmosphere 420
Thickened within it; we, closing our eyes,
Endured the Heaven-sent plague. After a while,
When it had ceased, there stands this maiden in sight,
And wails aloud, shrill as the bitter note
Of the sad bird, when as she finds the couch
Of her void nest robbed of her young; so she,
Soon as she sees the body stripped and bare,
Bursts out in shrieks, and calls down curses dire

Upon their heads who had done it. Straightway then
 She gathers handfuls of dry dust, and brings them,
 And from a shapely brazen cruse held high 430
 She crowns the body with drink-offerings,
 Once, twice, and thrice. We at the sight rushed forth,
 And caught her, nothing daunted, on the spot;
 And taxed her with the past offence, and this
 The present. Not one whit did she deny;
 A pleasant though a pitiful sight to me;
 For nothing's sweeter than to have got off
 In person; but to bring into mischance
 One's friends is pitiful. And yet to pay
 No more than this is cheap, to save one's life. 440

CREON

Do you, I say—you, with your downcast brow—
 Own or deny that you have done this deed?

ANTIGONE

I say I did it; I deny it not.

CREON

Take yourself hence, whither you will, sir knave;
 You are acquitted of a heavy charge.

Exit Sentinel.

Now answer me concisely, not at length;
 Knew you the order not to do it?

ANTIGONE

Yes,

I knew it; what should hinder? It was plain.

CREON

And yet you dared to overstep my laws?

ANTIGONE

Because it was not Zeus who ordered it, 450
 Nor Justice, dweller with the Nether Gods,

Who gave such laws to men; nor did I deem
Your ordinance of so much binding force,
As that a mortal man should overbear
The unchangeable unwritten code of Heaven;
This is not of today and yesterday,
But lives for ever, having origin
Whence no man knows: whose sanctions I were loath
In God's sight to provoke, fearing the will
Of any man. I knew that I should die— 460
How otherwise? even although your voice
Had never so prescribed. And that I die
Before my hour is due, that I count gain.
For one who lives in many ills, as I—
How can she fail to gain by dying? So
To me it is no pain, to meet this fate;
But had I borne to leave the body of him
My mother bare unburied, then, indeed,
I might feel pain; but as it is, I cannot.
Now, if it seem to you that I commit 470
Folly—'tis like that I am found a fool
At a fool's mouth!

I SENATOR

Lo you, the spirit stout
Of her stout father's child—unapt to bend
Beneath misfortune!

CREON

But be well assured,
Tempers too stubborn are the first to fall;
The hardest iron from the furnace, forged
To stiffness, you may see most frequently
Shivered and broken; and the chafing steeds
I have known governed with a slender curb.
It is unseemly that a household drudge
Should be misproud; but she was conversant 480
With outrage, ever since she passed the bounds
Laid down by law; then hard upon that deed
Comes this, the second outrage, to exult

And triumph in her deed. Truly if here
She wield such powers uncensured, she is man,
I woman! Be she of my sister born,
Or nearer to myself than the whole band
Of our domestic tutelary Jove,
She, and the sister—for her equally
I charge with compassing this funeral—
Shall not escape a most tremendous doom.
And call her; for within the house but now
I saw her, frenzied and beside herself;
And it is common for a moody spirit,
That in the dark is plotting nothing good,
To get itself arrested for a knave
Before the deed is acted. None the less
I hate it, when one taken in a fault
Chooses to gloss the facts!

490

ANTIGONE

What would you, more
Than take my life?

CREON

Nothing; take that, take all.

ANTIGONE

Then why delay? As of your words to me
Nothing is pleasing, or, I trust, can be,
So mine are insupportable to you.
And yet from whence could I have gathered praise
More worthily, than from depositing
My own brother in a tomb? These, all of them,
Would utter one approval, did not fear
Seal up their lips. 'Tis tyranny's privilege,
And not the least—power to declare and do
What it is minded.

500

CREON

You, of all this people,
Are singular in your discernment.

ANTIGONE

Nay,

They all discern; they but refrain their tongues
At your behest.

CREON

And you deem otherwise, 510
And feel no shame?

ANTIGONE

It is no cause for shame,
Honouring the flesh and blood that is one's own.

CREON

And his dead foeman, was not he your brother
As well?

ANTIGONE

Yes, the same sire's and mother's son.

CREON

Why pay, then, honours which are wrongs to him?

ANTIGONE

The dead clay makes no protest.

CREON

Not although
His with a villain's share your reverence?

ANTIGONE

It was a brother perished, not a slave.

CREON

Spoiling, I say, this country; while his rival
Stood for it.

ANTIGONE

Yet the Grave invokes these laws
For all alike.

CREON

But not an equal measure 520
Both for the good man and the bad.

ANTIGONE

Who knows
This is not piety there?

CREON

The enemy
Can never be a friend, even though dead.

ANTIGONE

Well, I was born for fellowship in love,
Not fellowship in hate.

CREON

Then get you down
Thither, and love, if you must love, the dead!
No woman, while I live, shall order me.

Chorus.

See where out by the doors Ismene
Weeping drops of sisterly grieving
Comes; but a cloud o'erhanging her eyebrows
Mars her dark-flushed cheek, and moistens
Her fair face with pitiful tears.

530

Enter Attendants with ISMENE.

CREON

And you—who like a viper unawares
Have crept into my house, and sucked me bloodless,
While I unknowingly was fostering you,
Twin furies, to the upsetting of my throne—
Come, tell me, will you say you also shared
This burying, or protest your innocence?

ISMENE

Yes, I have done it—if Antigone
Says so—I join with her and share the blame.

ANTIGONE

That justice will not suffer; you refused,
And I—I had no partner.

ISMENE

In your troubles 540
I do not blush to claim companionship
Of what you have to endure.

ANTIGONE

Whose was the deed
Death and the spirits of the dead can tell!
A friend in words is not a friend for me.

ISMENE

Shame me not, sister, by refusing me
A death, for honouring the dead, with you!

ANTIGONE

Mix not your death with mine. Do not claim work
You never touched. I shall suffice to die.

ISMENE

And what care I for life, if I lost you?

ANTIGONE

Ask Creon; you are dutiful to him.

ISMENE

Why do you cross me so, to no good end? 550

ANTIGONE

Nay, I am sick at heart, if I do make
My mock at you.

ISMENE

Nay but what can I do,
Now, even yet, to help you?

ANTIGONE

Save yourself ;
I do not grudge you your deliverance.

ISMENE

O me unhappy ! And must I miss your fate?

ANTIGONE

Why, life was your own choice ; but death was mine.

ISMENE

Not if you count my words unspoken.

ANTIGONE

Here
Your judgment was approved ; but mine, elsewhere.

ISMENE

Then our delinquency is equal, too.

ANTIGONE

Take courage, you are living ; but my life
Long since has died, so I might aid the dead. 560

CREON

Of these two girls I swear the one even now
Has been proved witless ; the other was so born.

ISMENE

Ah sir, the wretched cannot keep the wit
That they were born with, but it flits away.

CREON

Yours did so, when you chose to join ill-doers
In their ill-faring.

ISMENE

How could I live on
Alone, without my sister?

CREON

Do not say
"My sister"; for you have no sister more.

ISMENE

What, will you put to death your own son's bride?

CREON

He may go further afield—

ISMENE

Not as by troth
Plighted to her by him. 570

CREON

Unworthy wives
For sons of mine I hate.

ANTIGONE

O dearest Hæmon,
How are you slighted by your father!

CREON

I
Am weary of your marriage, and of you.

ISMENE

Your own son! will you tear her from his arms?

CREON

Hades it was, that should prevent that wedding.

I SENATOR

I see, the sentence of this maiden's death
Has been determined.

CREON

Then we see the same.
An end of trifling. Slaves, there, take them in!
As women, henceforth, must they live—not suffered
To gad abroad; for even bold men flinch, 580
When they view Death hard by the verge of Life.

Exeunt ANTIGONE and ISMENE, *guarded.*

Chorus.

I. 1.

Happy the man whose cup of life is free
From taste of evil! If Heaven's influence shake them,
No ill but follows, till it overtake them,
All generations of his family;
As when the ocean's waves up-welling
Course above their cavernous dwelling
Hid beneath the water-floor,
Hurried by the sea-borne sway
Of Threician breezes they
Roll up from the regions under, 590
Black and dark, the leeward shore,
And the beaten beaches thunder
Answer to the roar.

I. 2.

Woes upon woes on Labdacus' race I see—
Living or dead—inveterately descend;
And son with sire entangled, without end,
And by some God smitten without remedy;
For a light of late had spread
O'er the last surviving root
In the house of Œdipus;
Now, the sickle murderous
Of the Rulers of the dead, 600
And wild words beyond control,
And the frenzy of her own soul,
Again mow down the shoot.

II. 1.

Thy power, O God, what pride of man can stay,
 Which neither slumber, father of decay,
 Nor even the tireless moons of Heaven destroy?
 Thy throne is founded fast,
 High on Olympus, in great brilliancy, 610
 Far beyond Time's annoy.
 Through present and through future and through past
 Sufficeth one decree;
 Ruin is rife
 In every land, in every lot of life.

II. 2.

For wandering Hope to many among mankind
 Seems pleasurable; but to many a mind
 Proves but a mockery of its wild desires.
 They know not aught, nor fear,
 Till their feet feel the pathway strewn with fires. 620
 " If evil good appear,
 That soul to his ruin is divinely led"—
 (Wisely the word was said !)
 And short the hour
 He spends unscathed by the avenging power.

Hæmon comes, thy last surviving
 Child. Is he here to bewail, indignant,
 His lost bride, Antigone? Grieves he
 For a vain promise—her marriage-bed? 630

Enter HÆMON.

CREON

We shall know soon, better than seers can tell us.
 Son, you are here in anger, are you not,
 Against your sire, hearing his final doom
 Upon your bride to be? Or are we friends,
 Always, with you, whate'er our policy?

HÆMON

Yours am I, father; and you guide my steps
 With your good counsels, which for my part I
 Will follow closely; for there is no marriage
 Shall occupy a larger place with me
 Than your direction, in the path of honour.

CREON

So is it right, my son, to be disposed—
In everything to back your father's quarrel. 640
For 'tis for this men pray to get and rear
At home obedient children—to requite
The foe with evil, and their father's friend
Honour, as did their father. But for this,
Whoever breeds a worthless progeny—
What other language would you hold of him,
But that he fathered troubles for himself,
And store of laughter for his enemies?
Nay, never fling away your wits, my son,
Through liking for a woman; recollect,
Cold are embracings, where the wife is naught, 650
Who shares your board and bed. And what worse sore
Can plague us, than a loved one's worthlessness?
Better to spurn this maiden as a foe!
Leave her to wed some bridegroom in the grave!
For, having caught her in the act, alone
Of the whole city disobeying me,
I'll not bely myself before them all,
But kill her. Now let her go glorify
Her God of kindred! If I choose to cherish
My own relations in rebelliousness,
Then verily I must count on strangers too. 660
For whosoever is a man of merit
In his own household will be found upright
In the state also; while whoe'er offends
Against the laws by violence, or by pride
That dictates to his rulers—I deny
Favour to such. Obedience is due
To the state's officer in small and great,
Just and unjust commandments; he who pays it,
I should be confident would govern well,
And cheerfully be governed, and abide
A true and trusty comrade at my back,
Firm in the ranks amid the storm of war. 670
There lives no greater fiend than Anarchy;

She ruins states, turns houses out of doors,
Breaks up in rout the embattled soldiery;
While Discipline preserves the multitudes
Of the ordered host alive. Therefore it is
We must assist the cause of order; this
Forbids concession to a feminine will;
Better be outcast, if we must, of men,
Than have it said a woman worsted us. 680

I SENATOR

Unless old age have robbed me of myself,
I think the tenor of your words is wise.

HÆMON

The Gods, my father, in mankind implant
Intelligence, of all good things the highest;
And yet to say that you speak wrongly in this
I lack the power; nor do I covet it.
Still, in some other it might be well, to say it;
And as your son, it is for me to mark
The words and deeds, and the complaints, of all.
Your frown appals him, when a common man 690
Has things to say that will offend your ears;
While I am able secretly to gather
This; how the folk mourn for this maiden; telling
How—"Of all women most unmeriting, she
For noblest acts dies by the worst of deaths,
Who her own brother battle slain—unburied—
Would not allow to perish in the fangs
Of carrion hounds or any bird of prey;
And" (so the whisper darkling passes round)
"Is she not worthy to be carved in gold?" 700
Father, beside your welfare there is nothing
More prized by me; for what more glorious crown
Can be to children, than their father's honour?
Or to a father, from his sons, than theirs?
Do not persist, then, to retain at heart
One sole idea, that the thing is right

Which you pronounce, and nothing else beside.
 For all men who believe themselves alone
 Wise, or that they possess a soul or speech
 Such as none other, turn them inside out,
 They are found void; and though a man be wise, 710
 It is no shame for him to live and learn,
 And not to persevere too far. You see
 How all the trees on winter torrent banks,
 Yielding, preserve their sprays; those that would stem it
 Break, roots and all; the shipman too, who keeps
 The vessel's main sheet taut, and will not slacken,
 Goes cruising, in the end, keel uppermost:
 Let thy wrath go! Be willing to relent!
 For if some sense, even from a younger head,
 Be mine to afford, I say it is far better 720
 A man should be, for every accident,
 Furnished with inbred skill; but what of that?
 Since nature's bent will have it otherwise,
 'Tis good to learn of those who counsel wisely.

I SENATOR

Sir, you might learn, when he speaks seasonably;
 And you, from him; for both have spoken well.

CREON

Men that we are, must we be sent to school
 To learn discretion of a boy like this?

HÆMON

None that's dishonest; and if I am young,
 Age is not to be looked at before actions.

CREON

And "action" is—to shew respect to rebels! 730

HÆMON

Not piety, to wrongdoers, at my bidding.

CREON

Was it not some such taint infected her?

HÆMON

So say not all this populace of Thebes.

CREON

The city to prescribe me my decrees!

HÆMON

Look, say you so, you are too young in this!

CREON

Must I reign here to others' minds than mine?

HÆMON

No city can consist of but one man.

CREON

Is not the King the city?

HÆMON

That were brave—

You, a sole ruler of an empty land!

CREON

This is the woman's champion, as it seems!

740

HÆMON

Woman yourself! It is for you I care.

CREON

O villain—traversing thy father's rights!

HÆMON

Because I see you sinning against right.

CREON

Sin I, to cause my sway to be held sacred?

HÆMON

You desecrate, by trampling on Heaven's honour.

CREON

Foul spotted heart—a woman's underling !

HÆMON

You will not find me following the vile.

CREON

I say this speech of thine was all for her.

HÆMON

And you, and me, and for the Gods beneath !

CREON

Never shall she survive to marry thee !

750

HÆMON

Die as she may, she shall not die alone.

CREON

Art thou grown bold enough to threaten, too ?

HÆMON

Where is the threat, to speak against vain counsel ?

CREON

Vain boy, thyself shalt rue thy counselling.

HÆMON

I had called you erring, were you not my sire.

CREON

Thou woman's bondman, do not spaniel me !

HÆMON

Do you expect to speak, and not be answered ?

CREON

Do I so ? By Olympus over us,
If thou revile me, and find fault with me,

Never believe but it shall cost thee dear !
Bring out the wretch, that in men's sight, at once, 760
Here, with her bridegroom by her, she may die !

HÆMON

Not in my sight, at least—not by my side,
Believe it, shall she perish ! And for thee—
Storm at the friends who choose thy company !
My face thou never shalt behold again. *Exit.*

I SENATOR

The man is gone, my lord, headlong with rage ;
And wits so young, when galled, are full of danger.

CREON

Let be, let him imagine more, or do,
Than mortal may ; yet he shall not redeem
From sentence those two maidens.

I SENATOR

Both of them ?
Is it your will to slay them both alike ? 770

CREON

That is well said ; not her who did not touch it.

I SENATOR

And by what death mean you to kill the other ?

CREON

Into some waste untrodden of mankind
She shall be drawn, and, in some rock-hewn cave,
With only food enough provided her
For expiation, so that all the city
Escape the guilt of blood, buried alive.
There, if she ask him, Hades, the one God
Whom she regards, may grant her not to perish ;
Or there, at latest, she shall recognize
It is lost labour to revere the dead. *Exit.* 780

Chorus.

O Love, thou art victor in fight : thou mak'st all things afraid ;
 Thou couchest thee softly at night on the cheeks of a maid ;
 Thou passest the bounds of the sea, and the folds of the fields ;
 To thee the immortal, to thee the ephemeral yields ;
 Thou maddenest them that possess thee ; thou turnest astray 790
 The souls of the just, to oppress them, out of the way ;
 Thou hast kindled amongst us pride, and the quarrel of kin ;
 Thou art lord, by the eyes of a bride, and the love-light therein ;
 Thou sittest assessor with Right ; her kingdom is thine,
 Who sports with invincible might, Aphrodita divine. 800

Enter ANTIGONE, guarded.

I too, myself, am carried as I look
 Beyond the bounds of right ;
 Nor can I brook
 The springing fountain of my tears, to see
 My child, Antigone,
 Pass to the chamber of universal night.

I. 1.

ANTIGONE

Behold me, people of my native land :
 I wend my latest way :
 I gaze upon the latest light of day
 That I shall ever see ;
 Death, who lays all to rest, is leading me 810
 To Acheron's far strand
 Alive ; to me no bridal hymns belong,
 For me no marriage song
 Has yet been sung ; but Acheron instead
 Is it, whom I must wed.

Chorus.

Nay but with praise and voicings of renown
 Thou partest for that prison-house of the dead ;
 Unsmitten by diseases that consume,
 By sword unvisited, 820
 Thou only of mortals freely shalt go down,
 Alive, to the tomb.

I. 2.

ANTIGONE

I have heard tell the sorrowful end of her,
That Phrygian sojourner
On Sipylus' peak, offspring of Tantalus;
How stony shoots upgrown
Like ivy bands enclosed her in the stone;
With snows continuous
And ceaseless rain her body melts away;
Streams from her tear-flown head
Water her front; likest to hers the bed
My fate prepares today.

830

Chorus.

She was of godlike nature, goddess-sprung,
And we are mortals, and of human race;
And it were glorious odds
For maiden slain, among
The equals of the Gods
In life—and then in death—to gain a place.

II. 1.

ANTIGONE

They mock me. Gods of Thebes! why scorn you me
Thus, to my face,
 Alive, not death-stricken yet?
O city, and you the city's affluent race
Of habitants—ye streams from Dirca's source—
Ye woods that shadow Theba's chariot-course,
Listen and see,
 Let none of you forget,
How sacrificed, and for what laws offended,
By no tears friended,
 I to the prisoning mound
Of a strange grave am journeying under ground
Ah me unhappy! home is none for me;
Alike in life or death an exile must I be.

840

850

Chorus.

Thou to the farthest verge forth-faring,
O my child, of daring,
Against the lofty threshold of the laws
Didst stumble and fall. The cause
Is some ancestral load, which thou art bearing.

II. 2.

ANTIGONE

There didst thou touch upon my bitterest bale—
A threefold tale—

My father's piteous doom,
Yea and all ours, the stock illustrious yet 860
Of Labdacus' house. O horrors that beset
My mother's bed ! O spouse from her own womb
Untimely born !

O wedlock of my sire !
O ye from whom I drew my life forlorn,
Towards you, unblest,
Unwedded—lo, a guest
Exiled from life, I journey ever nigher !
And thou too, ruined, my brother, in a wife, 870
Didst by thy death bring death upon thy sister's life !

Chorus.

To pay due reverence is a duty, too ;
And power—his power, whose empire is confest,
May no-wise be transgressed ;
But thee thine own infatuate mood o'er-threw.

ANTIGONE

Friendless, unwept, unwed,
I, sick at heart, am led
The way prepared for me ;
Day's hallowed orb on high 880
I may no longer see ;
For me no tears are spent,
Nor any friends lament
The death I die.

Enter CREON.

CREON

Think you that any one, if space were given,
Before he died, for wailing and lament,
Would ever make an end ? Away with her !
Wall her up close in some deep catacomb,
As I have said ; leave her, alone, apart,
To perish, if she will ; or if she live,

To make her tomb her tenement. For us,
We will be guiltless of this maiden's blood ;
But here on earth she shall abide no more. 890

ANTIGONE

Thou Grave, my bridal chamber ! dwelling-place
Hollowed in earth, my everlasting prison,
Whither I bend my steps, to join the band
Of kindred, whose more numerous host already
Persephone hath counted with the dead ;
Of whom I last and far most miserably
Descend, before my term of life is full ;
I come, cherishing this hope especially,
To gain approval in my father's sight,
Approval too, my mother, in thine, and thine
Dear brother ! for that with these hands I paid, 900
Unto you dead, lavement and ordering
And sepulchre-libations ; and that now,
Polynices, in the tendance of thy body
I meet with this reward. Yet to the wise
It was well done, that I did honour thee.
For never had I, even had I been
Mother of children, or if spouse of mine
Lay dead and mouldering, in the state's despite
Taken this task upon me. Do you ask
What argument I follow here of law ?
One husband dead, another might be mine ;
Sons by another, did I lose the first ; 910
But, sire and mother hidden in the grave,
A brother is a branch that grows no more.
Yet I, preferring by this argument
To honour thee to the end, in Creon's sight
Appeared to sin in that I did so, and
Commit an insolent trespass, O my brother !
And for this cause he hath bid lay hands on me,
And leads me, not as wives or brides are led,
Unblest with any marriage, any care
Of children ; destitute of friends, forlorn,

Yet living, to the chambers of the dead 920
 See me descend. Yet what celestial right
 Did I transgress? How should I any more
 Look up to heaven, in my adversity?
 Whom should I call to aid? Am I not come
 Through piety to be held impious? If
 This is approved in Heaven, why let me suffer,
 And own that I have sinned; but if the sin
 Belong to these—O may their punishment
 Be measured by the wrongfulness of mine!

I SENATOR

*Still the same storms possess her, with the same
 Precipitance of spirit.* 930

CREON

*Then for this
 Her guards shall rue their slowness.*

ANTIGONE

*Woe for me!
 The word I hear comes hand in hand with death!*

I SENATOR

*I may not say Be comforted, for this
 Shall not be so; I have no words of cheer.*

ANTIGONE

*O City of Theba! O my country! Gods,
 The Fathers of my race! I am led hence—
 I linger now no more. Behold me, lords, 940
 The last of your kings' house—what doom is mine,
 And at whose hands, and for what cause! that I
 Duly performed the dues of piety!*

Excunt ANTIGONE and guards.

Chorus

I. 1.

For a dungeon brazen-barred
The body of Danae endured
To exchange Heaven's daylight of old,
In a tomb-like chamber immured,
Hid beneath fetter and guard ;
And she was born, we are told,
O child, my child, unto honour,
And a son was begotten upon her
To Zeus in a shower of gold.
But the stress of a Fate is hard ;
Nor wealth, nor warfare, nor ward,
Nor black ships cleaving the sea
Can resist her, or flee.

950

I. 2.

And the Thracians' king, Dryas' son,
The hasty of wrath, was bound
For his words of mocking and pride ;
Dionysus closing him round,
Pent in a prison of stone ;
Till, his madness casting aside
Its flower and fury wild,
He knew what God he reviled—
Whose power he had defied ;
Restraining the Mænad choir,
Quenching the Evian fire,
Enraging the Muses' throng,
The lovers of song.

960

II. 1.

And by the double main
Of seas Cyanean—there
Lies the Bosporean strand,
And the lone Thracian plain
Of Salmydessus, where
Is Ares' border-land ;
Who saw the stab of pain
Dealt on the Phineid pair
At that fierce dame's command ;
Blinding the orbits of their blasted sight,
Smitten, without spear to smite,
By a spindle's point made bare,
And by a bloody hand.

970

II. 2.

They mourned their mother dead,
 Their hearts with anguish wrung,
 Wasting away, poor seed
 Of her deserted bed ; 980
 Who, Boreas' daughter, sprung
 From the old Erechtheid breed,
 In remote caverns fed
 Her native gales among,
 Went swiftly as the steed,
 Offspring of Heaven, over the steep-down wild ;
 Yet to her too, my child,
 The Destinies, that lead
 Lives of long ages, clung.

Enter TIRESIAS led by a Boy.

TIRESIAS

Princes of Thebes, two fellow-travellers,
 Debtors in common to the eyes of one,
 We stand before you ; for a blind man's path
 Hangs on the guide who marshals him the way. 990

CREON

What would'st thou now, reverend Tiresias?

TIRESIAS

That will I tell. Do thou obey the seer.

CREON

I never have departed hitherto
 From thy advice.

TIRESIAS

And therefore 'tis, thou steerest
 The city's course straight forward.

CREON.

Thou hast done me
 Good service, I can witness.

TIRESIAS

Now again

Think, thou dost walk on fortune's razor-edge.

CREON

What is it? I tremble but to see thee speak.

TIRESIAS

Listen to what my art foreshadoweth,
And thou shalt know. I lately, taking seat
On my accustomed bench of augury,
Whither all tribes of fowl after their kind 1000
Always resort, heard a strange noise of birds
Screaming with harsh and dissonant impetus;
And was aware how each the other tore
With murderous talons; for the whirr of wings
Rose manifest. Then feared I, and straight made trial
Of sacrifices on the altar-hearths
All blazing; but, out of the offerings,
There sprang no flame; only upon embers charred
Thick droppings melted off the thigh-pieces,
And heaved and sputtered, and the gall-bladders
Burst, and were lost, while from the folds of fat 1010
The loosened thigh-bones fell. Such auguries,
Failing of presage through the unmeaningness
Of holy rites, I gather from this lad,
Who is to me, as I to others, guide.
And this state-sickness comes by thy self-will;
For all our hearths and altars are defiled
With prey of dogs and fowl, who have devoured
The dead unhappy son of Œdipus.
Therefore the Gods accept not of us now
Solemn peace-offering or burnt sacrifice, 1020
Nor bird trills out a happy-boding note,
Full fed with homicidal blood-shedding.
This, then, my son, consider; that to err
From the right path is common to mankind;

But having erred, that mortal is no more
 Losel or fool, who medicines the ill
 He has incurred, and stands not obstinate.
 Conceit of will savours of emptiness.
 Give way, then, in the presence of the dead.
 Wound not the life that's perished. Where's thy valour 1030
 In slaying o'er the slain? Well I advise,
 Meaning thee well; 'tis pleasantest to learn
 Of good advisers, when their words bring gain.

CREON

Old man, ye all, like archers at a mark,
 Discharge your shafts at me; I am not spared
 Even your soothsayers' practice; by whose tribe
 Long since have I been made merchandize of,
 And bought, and sold. Gather your gains at will!
 Market your Sardinian silver, Indian gold!
 That man ye shall not cover with a tomb;
 Not though the eagle ministers of Jove 1040
 To Jove's own throne should bear their prey of him,
 Not even for horror at such sacrilege
 Will I permit his burial. This I know;
 There is no power in any man to touch
 The Gods with sacrilege; but foul the falls
 Which men right cunning fall, Tiresias—
 Old man, I say—when for the sake of gain
 They speak foul treason with a fair outside.

TIRESIAS

Alas, does no man know, does no man think—

CREON

What should one think? What common saw is this?

TIRESIAS

How far good counsel passes all things good? 1050

CREON

So far, I think, folly's the worst of harm!

TIRESIAS

That is the infirmity that fills thy nature.

CREON

I care not to retort upon thee, seer.

TIRESIAS

Thou dost, thou say'st my oracles are false.

CREON

All the prophetic tribe are covetous.

TIRESIAS

And that of kings fond of disgraceful gain.

CREON

Know'st thou of whom thou speak'st? I am thy lord.

TIRESIAS

Yea, thou hast saved the state; I gave it thee.

CREON

Thou art a wise seer, but in love with wrong.

TIRESIAS

Thou wilt impel me to give utterance
To my still dormant prescience.

1060

CREON

Say on;

Only beware thou do not speak for gain.

TIRESIAS

For gain of thine, methinks, I do not speak.

CREON

Thou shalt not trade upon my wits, be sure.

TIRESIAS

And be thou sure of this ; thou shalt not tell
Many more turns of the sun's chariot-wheel,
Ere thou shalt render satisfaction, one
From thy own loins in payment, dead for dead,
For that thou hast made Life join hands with Death,
And sent a living soul unworthily
To dwell within a tomb, and keep'st a corpse
Here, from the presence of the Powers beneath, 1070
Not for thy rights or any God's above,
But lawlessly in their despite usurped,
Unhallowed, disappointed, uninterred ;
Wherefore the late-avenging punishers,
Furies, from Death and Heaven, lay wait for thee,
To take thee in the evil of thine own hands.
Look to it, whether I be bribed who speak ;
For as to that, with no great wear of time,
Men's, women's wails to thine own house shall answer.
Also all cities rise in mutiny, 1080
Unto the relics of whose heroes dead
No obsequies are done, save by wild beasts,
Or dogs, or by some fowl, whose pinions bear
Unhallowed savour to their civic fire.
Such bolts, in wrath, since thou dar'st anger me,
I loosen at thy bosom, archer-like,
Sure-aimed, whose burning smart thou shalt not shun.
Lead me away, boy, to my own home again ;
And let him vent his spleen on younger men,
And learn to keep a tongue more gentle, and
A brain more sober, than he carries now. 1090

I SENATOR

The seer is gone, my lord, denouncing woe ;
And from the day my old hairs began to indue
Their white for black, we have known him for a watch
Who never barked to warn the state in vain.

I know it too; and I am ill at ease;
'Tis bitter to submit; but Até's hand
Smites bitterly on the spirit that abides her.

Creon Menœceus' son, be wise at need!

What should I do, then? speak, and I will hearken.

Go free the maiden from the vault, and build 1100
A tomb for that dead outcast.

You approve it?
You deem that I should yield?

Sir, with all speed.
Swift-footed come calamities from Heaven
To cut off the perverse.

O God, 'tis hard !
But I quit heart, and yield ; I may not venture
To fight at odds with Fate.

Up then, to work !
Commit it not to others !

I am gone
Upon the instant. Quickly, quickly men,
You and your fellows, get you, axe in hand,
Up to the place, there, yonder; and because
I am thus minded, other than before,
I who did bind her will be there to loose;

For it misgives me it is best to keep
The old appointed laws, all one's life long.

Exeunt CREON and Attendants.

Chorus.

I. 1.

Thou by many names addrest,
Child of Zeus loud-thundering,
Glory of a Theban maid,
Who unbidden wanderest
Fair Italia's King,
And art lord in each deep glade
Whither all men seek to her,
Eleusinian Demeter;
Bacchus, who by soft-flowing waters
Of Ismenus habitest
Theba, mother of Bacchant daughters,
With the savage Dragon's stock,

1120

I. 2.

Thee the lurid wild-fire meets
On the double-crested rock,
Where Corycian Nymphs arow
Bacchic-wise ascending go,
Thee Castalia's rill;
Thee the ivy-covered capes
Usher forth of Nysa's hill,
And the shore with green of grapes
Clustering, where the hymn to thee
Rises up immortally,
Visitant in Theban streets,
"Evoe, O Evoe!"

1130

II. 1.

Wherefore, seeing thy City thus—
City far above all other
Dear to thee, and her, thy mother
Lightning-slain—by sickness grievous
Holden fast in all her gates,
Come with quickness to relieve us,
By the slopes of Parnasus,
Or the roaring straits.

1140

II. 2.

Hail to thee, the first advancing
In the stars' fire-breathing chorus!

Leader of the nightly strain,
 Boy and son of Zeus and King!
 Manifest thyself before us
 With thy frenzied Thyiad train,
 Who their lord Iacchus dancing
 Praise, and all night sing.

1150

Enter a MESSENGER.

MESSENGER

You citizens who dwell beside the roof
 Of Cadmus and Amphion, till it end
 There is no state of human life that I
 Would praise, or blame; for none can prophesy
 What is set down for mortals; Fortune still
 Raising and Fortune overthrowing still
 The happy and the unhappy. Creon, methought,
 Was enviable erewhile, when he preserved
 This land of Cadmus from its enemies,
 And took the country's absolute monarchy,
 And ruled it, flourishing with a noble growth
 From his own seed; and now, he has lost all.
 For when men forfeit the delights of life,
 One in that case I do not call alive,
 But deem of him as of some animate corse.
 Pile then great riches, if you please, at home;
 Wear thou the living semblance of a king;
 Yet, if good luck be wanting, all the rest
 I would not purchase, as compared with joy,
 From any, for the shadow of a shade.

1160

1170

SENATOR

What new disaster to the royal seed
 Com'st thou to tell of?

MESSENGER

They are dead; the living
 Are guilty of their death.

I SENATOR

Who is the slayer,
 Speak! who the victim?

MESSENGER

Hæmon is no more ;
His life-blood spilt, and by no stranger's hand.

I SENATOR

What, by his father's, or his own?

MESSENGER

Self-slaughtered ;
Wroth with his father for the maiden slain.

I SENATOR

Prophet ! how strictly have thy words come true !

MESSENGER

Look to the future, for these things are so.

I SENATOR

And I behold the poor Eurydice 1180
Come to us from the palace, Creon's wife ;
Either through chance, or hearing her son's name.

Enter EURYDICE.

EURYDICE

O all you citizens, I heard the sound
Of your discourse, as I approached the gates,
Meaning to bring my prayers before the face
Of Pallas ; even as I undid the bolts,
And set the door ajar, a note of trouble
As of my own house pierces through my ears ;
And I sink backward on my handmaidens
Afaint for terror ; but whate'er the tale, 1190
Tell it again ; I am no novice, I,
In misery, that hearken.

MESSENGER

Dear my mistress,
I saw, and I will speak, and will let slip
No syllable of the truth. Why should we soothe

Your ears with stories, only to appear
Liars thereafter? Truth is always right.
—I followed in attendance on your lord,
To the flat hill-top, where spitefully
Was lying, yet, harried by dogs, the body
Of Polynices. Pluto's name, and hers,
The Lady of Passings, we invoked, to stay 1200
Their anger, and be favourable; and him
We washed with pure lustration, and consumed
On fresh-lopped branches the remains of him,
And piled a monument of natal earth
High over all; thence to the maiden's cell,
Death's hollow bridal-chamber floored with stone,
We made as if to enter. But afar
One fellow hears a loud uplifted wail
About that unfunereal vestibule,
And coming tells his lord; the confused noise
Of piteous crying finds Creon as he draws nigher,
And he sends forth a lamentable groan, 1210
“And am I a true prophet! Woe is me,
Tread I the path most miserable of all
My journeyings past! My son's voice thrills my ear.
What ho, my guard! Run quickly thitherward,
Up to the tomb—enter the masonry
Where stones have been disturbed—proceed inside
The opening, and discern, whether I hear
The voice of Hæmon, or am duped by Heaven.”
Quickly, at our distracted lord's command,
We searched: and in the tomb's inmost recess 1220
Found we her, as she had been hanged by the neck,
Fast in a strip-like loop of linen; and him
Laid by her, clasping her about the waist,
Mourning his wedlock severed in the grave,
And his sire's deeds, and his ill-fated bride.
He, when he sees them, with a terrible cry
Goes in towards him, calling out aloud
“Ah miserable, what hast thou done? what mind
Hadst thou? by what misfortune art thou crazed?
Come out, my son,—suppliant I ask of thee!” 1230

But with fierce aspect the youth glared at him;
 Spat in his face; answered him not a word;
 Grasped at the crossed hilts of his sword, and drew it,
 And—for the father started forth in flight—
 Missed him! then, angered with himself, poor fool,
 There as he stood he flung himself along
 Upon the sword-point firmly planted in
 The middle of his breast, and, conscious yet,
 Clings to the maid, clasped in his failing arms,
 And gasping, sends forth on the pallid cheek
 Sharp stifled sobs, with crimson drops of gore.
 So he lies dead—with his arms round the dead; 1240
 And has obtained full bridal honours, down
 In Hades' halls—unhappy! and displayed
 Among mankind—yea what far worst of woe
 The lack of counsel brings a man to know!

Exit EURYDICE.

I SENATOR

What do you make of this? The woman's gone
 Back, and without one word, of good or bad!

MESSENGER

I marvel too; yet am I hopeful, that
 She would not choose, hearing her son's sad fate,
 In public to begin her keening-cry;
 But rather to her handmaids in the house
 Dictate the mourning for a private pain.
 She is not ignorant of self-control,
 That she should err. 1250

I SENATOR

I know not; but on me
 Weighs heavily both silence over-much,
 And loud complaint in vain.

MESSENGER

Well, we shall know it,
 If she hide aught within a high-wrought heart

Even to suppression of its utterance,
 If we approach the house. Yes, you say truly,
 It does weigh heavy, silence over-much.

Exit.

Chorus.

Lo now, Creon himself draws near us,
 Claspings a record—
 If I may say so—but too manifest
 Of no ruin at hands external,
 But fore-caused by his own self-will.

1260

Enter CREON, attended, with the body of HÆMON.

I. 1.

CREON

O sins of a mind
 That is minded to stray!
 Mighty to bind
 And almighty to slay!
 Behold us, kin slayers and slain, O ye who stand by the way!
 Ah, newness of death!
 O my fruitless design!
 New to life's breath,
 O son that wert mine,
 Ah, ah, thou art dead, thou art freed, for a fault that was mine, not
 thine!

I SENATOR

Ah, how thou seem'st to see the truth, too late! 1270

CREON

Ah yes, I have learnt, I know it, miserable!

II. 1.

Heaviness hath o'ertaken me
 And mine head the rod;
 The roughness hath shaken me
 Of the paths I trod;
 Woe is me! my delight is brought low, cast under the feet of a God!
 Woe for man's labours that are profitless!

Re-enter the MESSENGER.

MESSENGER

O master, now thou hast and hast in store
Of sorrows; one thou bearest in thine arms,
And one at home thou seemest to be come
Merely to witness.

1280

CREON

And what more of sorrow,
Or what more sorrowful, is yet behind?

MESSENGER

Thy wife, the mother—mother of this dead corpse—
Is, by a blow just fallen, haplessly slain.

I. 2.

CREON

O hard to appease thee,
Haven of Death,
How should it please thee
To end this breath?

O herald of heavy news, what is this thy mouth uttereth?

O man, why slayest thou
A man that is slain?
Alas, how sayest thou
Anew and again

1290

That the slaying of a woman is added to slaying—a pain to a pain?

MESSENGER

See for thyself; the palace doors unclose.

The Altar is disclosed, with the dead body of Eurydice.

CREON

Woe is me! I view my second misery.

II. 2.

What deed is not done?
What tale is not told?
Mine arms, O my son,
Thy body enfold,

And I gaze on the face of the dead—the dead whom I behold.

Ah, child, for thy poor mother! ah for thee! 1300

MESSENGER

She with a sharp-edged dagger in her heart
Lies at the altar; and her darkened lids
Close on her wailing for the glorious lot
Of Megareus, who died before, and next
For his, and last, upon her summoning
Evil to fall on thee, the child-slayer!

III. 1.

CREON

Alas, I faint for dread!
Is there none will deal
One sword-thrust, and lay me dead
With the two-edged steel?
Ah woe is me!
I am all whelmed in utter misery!

1310

MESSENGER

It may be so; thou art arraigned of her
Who here lies dead, for the occasion thou
Hast wrought for Destiny on her, and him.

1 SENATOR

In what way did she slay herself and die?

MESSENGER

Soon as she heard the raising of the wail
For her son's death, she stabbed herself to the heart.

IV. 1.

CREON

Ah me, from whose guilt shall I borrow
Excuse for my guilt?
By me, by me only, O my sorrow,
Thy life-blood was spilt.
O bear me, haste ye, spare not,
To the ends of earth,
More nothing than they who were not
In the hour of birth!

1320

I SENATOR

Thou biddest well—if anything be well
 To follow, in calamity; the ills
 Lying at our feet, soonest o'erpast, are best.

III. 2.

CREON

Come, thou most welcome fate,
 O appear, come fast;
 Of my sad life bringing the date, 1330
 Of my days the last;
 Come quickly, I pray;
 Let me not look upon another day!

I SENATOR

This for to-morrow; we must take some thought
 For that which lies before us; as for this,
 It is their care to whom the care is given.

CREON

I did but join your prayer for our desire.

I SENATOR

Pray thou for nothing more; there is no respite
 To mortals from the ills of destiny.

IV. 2.

CREON

Lead me forth, cast me out, no other
 Than a man undone;
 Who have slain, unwitting, thy mother 1340
 And thee, my son!
 I turn me I know not where
 For my plans ill-spel,
 And a burden that is heavy to bear
 Has come down on my head.

Exit CREON, attended.

Chorus.

Wisdom first for a man's well-being
Maketh, of all things ; Heaven's insistence
Nothing allows of man's irreverence ;
And great blows great speeches avenging, 1350
Dealt on a boaster,
Teach men wisdom in age, at last.

Exeunt omnes.

NOTES.

2. I have after much hesitation followed the interpretation of the passage as it stands, which was first given by Boeckh.

4. I have adopted Porson's correction, *ἄτης ἔχον*.

24. I omit *χρησθεῖς*, which I cannot construe, and read *δικαίῳ. σὺν δίκῃ δικάῳ* is surely impossible.

31. If Professor Kennedy's interpretation is to be followed, read—

“ This is the matter which has been proclaimed
By your *good* Creon, as they say—and mine—
Mine too, I do confess !”

But my preference is for the more usual rendering.

125. I follow the reading *ἀντιπάλου δράκοντος*.

130. I cannot reconcile myself to the omission of the name of the slain warrior. The accusative participle *ὀρμῶντ'*, standing by itself, is surely bad Greek. It certainly is not justified by the very specific, though anonymous mention of “the man from Argos,” l. 106. I believe that the name *Καπανῆ'*, in an Ionic form, such as we sometimes find in Choruses, lurks behind that superfluous second genitive—*καναχῆς*. If this is so, and the comma is transferred from *ὑπερόπτας* to *χρυσού*, the passage, to my ear, gains both in sound and sense. The existence of *ὑπερέπτα* in the corresponding place of the strophe is a reason for retaining the old correction *ὑπερόπτας*.

134. The form of the participle *τανταλωθεῖς* involves a mythological allusion, which ought to be preserved in translation.

235. Read *δεδραγμένος*; and in 320, *λάλημα*; and in 497, *τί*.

450. I follow the reading *τοίουςδ' ἐν ἀνθρώποισιν ὥρισεν*, recommended by Professor Jebb.

556. The interpretation “but not without my having spoken” appears far-fetched and inconsistent with the context.

572, 4, 6. I do not follow the MSS. and Dindorf, but the traditional arrangement, which gives line 572 to Antigone.

600. I do not adopt Dindorf's reading *ὁ τέτατο*, but I adopt the conjecture *κόπῃς*, since it appears impossible to make sense of *ἀμᾶ κόπῃς*. For the sentiment, compare Llywarch Hen, as translated in Guest's *Orig. Cell.* Vol. II. p. 292—

“Unprenn agouit arnav
Odieine ys odit ;
Ac aynno duv derffit.”

“One tree with the tendril on it
Is escaping, it may be ;
But what God shall have willed, let it come !”

614. The passage is corrupt, and only a general impression of the meaning appears to be recoverable.

674. I follow Professor Jebb in reading *συμμάχων δορὸς*, but suppose it to mean simply “spearmen fighting in concert,” not “forces allied with ours.”

735. Compare Shakespeare, *A. V. L. I.* Act I, Sc. 1, l. 56. Other similarities of expression may be traced in l. 527, with *Temp.* Act V, Sc. 1, 64 ; in 737, with *J. C.* Act I, Sc. 2, 153, and in 1071, with *Hamlet*, Act I, Sc. 5, 77.

781. It is sometimes allowable to cut a new facet, in resetting a diamond. I have made the whole of this passage an address to Eros ; in the original the form of sentence is varied at l. 786, and the subject is changed to *ἡμερος* at l. 795. The metres employed here and at l. 1261, and some others in the play, are of Mr Swinburne's invention ; see his *Atalanta in Calydon*, which appeared while I was engaged upon it.

795. I read with the MSS. *τῶν μεγάλων πάρεδρος ἐν ἀρχαῖς θεσμῶν*. But what *ἀρχαί* are intended ? Clearly those which Eros has acquired, or Himeros for him. The reason of this conquest follows : these are the regions in which Aphrodita sports resistlessly. The conquest of Eros, Himeros and Aphrodita is one and the same conquest.

838. I have not omitted this line, as Dindorf.

851. Either this line or the next must go. I have supplied a few words to fill the gap.

876. Read *ταλαίφρων ἄγομαι τάνδ' ἐτοίμαν ὁδόν*.

908. *τίνος νόμου δὴ* is emphatic ; “there is law, as well as justice, on my side.”

943. The long conflict between *εὐσεβεῖν* and *σέβειν*, between piety and conventional reverence, is here reconciled. Compare ll. 454, 730, 872, 924. This is an instance in which it has appeared to me quite impossible to convey the moral weight of the original by translating the same Greek words always into the same English ones.

1065. *τροχούς*, the MSS. reading, is followed by Potter and Donaldson. “Many courses of the sun” would imply days ; hours seem wanted here. Moreover the epithet *ἀμλλητηῆρας* suits wheels better than courses.

1097. I take Atè as the object after *πάρα*, not as the instrument after *πατάξαι*. Like *νέμεσις, θάνατος*, &c. *ἄτη* tends in Sophocles towards personification.

1150. Read *ῶναξ*, not *Ναξίαις*.

1220. *κρεμαστὴν* is usually translated as if equivalent to *κρεμαμένην*. But this makes Hæmon's conduct ridiculous; the first thing he would do was to take down the body, and ll. 1223, 1237 show that he had actually done so.

1236. *ῥρεισε πλευραῖς μέσσον* must mean, I think, "pressed to his ribs, in the middle of them"; that is to say, where they meet. A man could hardly commit suicide by leaning *sideways* on his sword.

1281. I follow Professor Campbell's interpretation.

1301. I adopt the reading favoured by Professor Jebb, *ὄξοθήκτω βωμῷ περὶ ξίφει*.

1336. I read *ἐρώμεν*. This gives a force to the proposition in *συγκατενξάμην*, which is otherwise lost.

I have obligations to acknowledge to Professor Campbell for a few words in ll. 430, 740, 747; and to Dr Donaldson's version in l. 317. Besides many valuable criticisms, I am indebted for the final form of l. 523 to Miss Shore. Professor Jebb's edition appeared while these pp. were in the press, and has caused me to alter my views of the reading, or to revise my rendering, in a few passages; but I have not borrowed from his translation, or adopted his more bold—sometimes very tempting—innovations.

AJAX

AJAX

PERSONS REPRESENTED

The Goddess ATHENA.

ULYSSES, *son of Lartius, (or as some said of Sisyphus,) King of Ithaca.*

AJAX, *son of Telamon and Eribœa, leader of the forces of Salamis.*

TECMESSA, *daughter of Teuthras or Teleutas, King of Phrygia, the captive-wife of Ajax.*

EURYSACES, *a child, son of Ajax by Tecmessa.*

TEUCER, *son of Telamon by his captive-wife Hesione.*

MENELAUS, *King of Sparta, brother to Agamemnon.*

AGAMEMNON, *King of Argos, General-in-chief of the Greeks.*
A Messenger, a soldier in the Salaminian forces.

The CHORUS is composed of Mariners of the Salaminian squadron.

Servants to Ajax.



AJAX

Scene, the sea-shore of Troia, before the quarters of Ajax.

Enter ULYSSES, and ATHENA above.

ATHENA

Ever I see you, son of Lartius,
Busily hunting to achieve some quest
Upon your foes ; and I observe you now
Before the tents of Ajax, by the ships,
Where is his station in their farthest row,
Patiently tracing out and measuring
The newly-printed footmarks he has made,
That you may learn if he is within, or no.
And a keen scent, as of some Spartan hound,
Carries your course right bravely to its end ;
For so it is, he is but now come in,
Dripping with sweat, both from his countenance
And his hands armed for slaughter. So no longer 10
Need you be peering here inside the wicket ;
Only discover why you set yourself
This task, that you may learn from me, who know.

ULYSSES

O accents of the friendliest Power to me
Of all the Gods—Athena—with what clearness,
Although thou art remote from my regard,
As of some brazen-mouthed Etrurian horn,
I hear and recognize the voice of thee !
Rightly didst thou discern my prowling round
After a foe—Ajax the Shield-bearer ;
He and no other is it whom I am tracking. 20

He poses us by the irrational part
He has performed this night; if he has done it;
For we know nothing sure; we are astray.
I volunteered to undertake this labour;
For we have just found all the herds, our spoil,
To have been destroyed, slaughtered by violence,
Together with the herdsmen; and the crime
Every one lays to him. One scout, that saw him
Alone, with reeking sword, bounding along, 30
Spake and informed me; and immediately
I started on the trail; and of some footprints
I am assured; but others baffle me;
And whose they are I know not. In good time
Com'st thou! for as of old, so afterward,
In all things I am governed by thy hand.

ATHENA

I knew it, Ulysses; and in readiness
I came to meet you, and to guard your quest.

ULYSSES

Dear mistress, am I labouring to good end?

ATHENA

So far—that it was he who did the deed.

ULYSSES

How came he to set hand to such a folly? 40

ATHENA

Mastered by fury about Achilles' arms.

ULYSSES

Why does he make this onslaught upon cattle?

ATHENA

He thought to imbrue his hands in your hearts' blood.

ULYSSES

What, did he mean to fall upon the Greeks?

ATHENA

And would have done it, had I suffered him.

ULYSSES

How did he dare or hope to compass it?

ATHENA

At night, by stealth, singly he came on you—

ULYSSES

What, did he reach us and attain the goal?

ATHENA

Yes, he was just at the two Captains' doors.

ULYSSES

What made him hold his hand, raging for blood? 50

ATHENA

I kept him off, casting upon his eyes
Grievous conceits of his infatuate glee,
And turned him toward the flocks and common herd
Of captured cattle in the herdmen's charge,
Yet undivided. There he fell on them,
And slashed about the horned carcasses,
Cleaving their chines; and he supposed himself
Sometimes to seize and slay with his own hand
The two Atridæ, and sometimes to fall
Upon some other of the generals.

I, as he raged in his delirium-fit,
Urged him—impelled him deeper in the toils. 60
Thereafter, when he rested from this work,
He tied together, in their turn, with bonds,
The oxen that survived, and all the sheep,
And brought them to his dwelling, deeming them
No horned spoil, but men; and now within
Bound to each other he is torturing them.
Here—I will shew you his sheer lunacy;
That you yourself may see it, and report

To all the Argives. Stand courageously!
Do not imagine he is dangerous;
For I will turn and keep away his eyes
From looking on your presence.—Ho Sir, you, 70
Tying your prisoners' hands behind their backs—
Ajax, I say! Come forth, out from the palace!

ULYSSES

What dost thou, Athena? Call him out by no means!

ATHENA

Will you be silent, and not play the coward?

ULYSSES

Do not, for Heaven's sake, do it! Be content,
And let him keep within.

ATHENA

For fear of what?

Was he not, all along, a man?

ULYSSES

To me

An enemy; and he is so, even now.

ATHENA

And is not mocking sweetest, when you make
Your mock of enemies?

ULYSSES

I am content

He should remain within. 80

ATHENA

Are you afraid

To view a man, because he is stark mad?

ULYSSES

If he were sane, I had not budged for fear.

ATHENA

But now he shall not see that you are by.

ULYSSES

How can that be, unless his eyes are blind?

ATHENA

I will bedarken even eyes that see.

ULYSSES

Well, anything may happen, if a God
Take it in hand to do!

ATHENA

Now, hold your peace;
Remain where you are standing.

ULYSSES

So I will;
But I could wish that I were out of it.

ATHENA

Ho, Ajax, once again I summon you!
Why do you heed so little your ally?

90

Enter AJAX, with a scourge.

AJAX

Welcome, Athena! Welcome, Child of Jove!
Well art thou come! and I will honour thee
With gold oblations for this prize of mine!

ATHENA

That was well said; but did you—tell me now—
Blood your sword well upon the Argive host?

AJAX

So I may boast, and I will not deny it!

ATHENA

Did you lift hand upon the Atridæ, too?

AJAX

So, that they never shall flout Ajax more!

ATHENA

The men are dead—so I conceive you mean?

AJAX

Dead. Let them rob me of my armour, now! 100

ATHENA

Well, what about the son of Lartius?
How has he fared? Has he eluded you?

AJAX

Where that confounded fox is, asked you me?

ATHENA

I did—Ulysses, your competitor.

AJAX

He sits within, a most sweet prisoner;
I do not mean to kill him yet, my queen.

ATHENA

Till you have done—or got—what further?

AJAX

Till

Bound to a pillar of the court inside—

ATHENA

What mischief will you do to him, poor wretch?

AJAX

Score his back purple, and so finish him. 110

ATHENA

Nay, torture not the wretched creature so!

AJAX

Athena, to the rest I make thee welcome;
But he shall suffer this, and this alone.

ATHENA

Well, well, if it would give you so much pleasure,
Lay on, spare nought of what you think to do.

AJAX

I go to work. This I commit to thee ;
Stand by me, ever, such a friend as now. *Exit.*

ATHENA

Seest thou how great, Ulysses, is the might
Of Deities? Whom could you have found more prudent,
Or abler to perform his part, than he? 120

ULYSSES

I know of none ; and I commiserate him—
Wretch—notwithstanding that he is my foe,
Bound hand and foot with dire calamity ;
Pondering his case no deeper than my own,
Seeing in us all, as many as are alive,
Nothing but phantoms or a fleeting shade.

ATHENA

Thou therefore, looking on such sights as this,
Speak before Heaven no overweening word,
Nor e'er presume, though thou at all prevail
In weight of hand or plenteousness of wealth. 130
A day can prostrate and upraise again
All that is human ; but the temperate
Heaven favours, and abominates the froward.

Exeunt severally. Enter Mariners of Salamis, as Chorus.

Chorus.

Son of Telamon, who dost keep
Seat where sea-girt Salamis
Borders on the ocean-deep,
I am joyful in thy bliss ;
But if stroke from Jove on high,
Or ungentle calumny
From the Danaans light on thee,

Straight I fear exceedingly,
 And am daunted, like the eye
 Of some fluttering dove. And thus, 140
 In the night just faded now,
 Noisy rumours saddle us
 With dishonour, how that thou
 Did'st to the meadows take thy way
 Where our steeds run wild, and slay
 All the Danaans' flocks and herds—
 All the leavings of their spears,
 With thy gleaming blade.
 In such form his whispered words
 Ulysses pours in all men's ears,
 And can well persuade.
 For he tells of thee a thing 150
 Credible; and each that hears
 More than he who this imparts
 Joys, in thy griefs triumphing.
 For the archer at great hearts
 Cannot miss; against the king
 Envy creeps; while one who jeered
 Thus at me would ill be heard.
 Yet, without the great, the small
 Make the tower but feeble wall;
 And happiest ordered were that state
 Where small are companied with great, 160
 Where strong are propped by weak.
 But with precepts of this lore
 Vain the effort o'er and o'er
 Foolish men to indoctrinate;
 And such are they who at thee rail;
 And we without thee nought avail
 In thy defence to speak.
 When they escape thine eye, my king,
 Like birds on wing
 They chatter loud and shrill;
 But if thou wert to appear,
 Quickly would they cower, in fear
 Of the mighty vulture, and be still. 170

I.

Did Artemis divine,
 Jove's Taurian daughter—ah that I should name
 The loud-voiced rumour, mother of my shame—
 Send thee against the common herds of kine?

Was't for some unrequited victory?

Was she defrauded of some trophied gear?
Or of some gift withheld unthankfully

In huntings of the deer?

Did mail-clad Ares, to avenge some slight

Of his auxiliar spear,

180

Punish the affront in stratagems of night?

II.

For ne'er could'st thou have gone

Of set intention, son of Telamon,

So far astray, as upon creatures dumb

To make assault. True, plagues from Heaven must come;
But Zeus and Phœbus keep us from the ill

Men rumour! While the kings illustrious—

While any abandoned son of Sisyphus

190

Insinuates calumny,

Raise not, my liege, raise not reproach for me,

By thus regarding still

Nothing, beyond thy chamber by the sea!

Up and leave thy seat, wherever thou art rooted

In this age-long ceasing from the fight,

Kindling wrath in heaven! The scoffs of foes are bruited

In the wind-swept glens, without affright;

And by all men thou art babbled at and hooted,

And to me comes nothing but despite.

200

Enter TECMESSA.

TECMESSA

Mariners of Ajax' fleet,
Of Eretheus' earth-born stock,
Lamentable is our case
Who in this far distant place
Love the house of Telamon;
Now our rugged mighty one,
Dreaded Ajax, is down-beat
By a wildering tempest-shock!

Chorus.

And by what so heavy chance
Has the night's tranquillity
Been broken, say? since Ajax great
Loves and sets thee by his side—

Thee, Teleutas' daughter, thee 210
 Phrygian-born, a spear-won bride ;
 Therefore not in ignorance
 Need'st thou answer.

TECMESSA

How should I
 Things unspeakable relate ?
 You shall hear of misery
 Deep as death ; for in the night,
 In one frenzy-fit, is gone
 All our Ajax' old renown ;
 Such blood-boltered butcheries
 In the hut await your sight,
 Offerings of no hand but his. 220

Chorus.

What story, impossible to blink or bear,
 Is this thou tellest, of a man like flame,
 By the great Danaans rumoured everywhere,
 And waxing with the loudness of its fame ?
 Ah woe is me, I fear the fate that comes !
 In all men's eyes the man will yield his breath,
 For that his frenzied hand brought common death, 230
 Under the sword's dark edge, on herds and herdmen-grooms.

TECMESSA

Thence, alas !
 Thence it was
 That with wonder
 We saw him come,
 With the sheep, all bound ;
 And slaughter some
 Within, on the ground ;
 And cleave asunder
 The ribs of others ;
 And seizing upon
 Two white-hoofed brothers,
 The severed tongue
 And head of the one
 On the earth he flung ;
 And the second tied
 By a post upright ; 240
 And snatching a thong
 Of harness-leather,

Fiercely he plied
 The whistling bight
 On the poor wether,
 Uttering the while reproaches many and dire,
 Such as some power scarce human might inspire.

Chorus.

Time is it that with veil covering our face
 We should endeavour stealthily to flee,
 Or take the speed-compelling oarsman's place,
 And get the vessel under weigh for sea ! 250
 With such loud menaces the Atridæ great
 Ply oar against us ; I am filled with dread
 Of being stoned, till he and we be dead,
 Suffering alike with him, whelmed by his desolate fate.

TECMESSA

No, no more ;
 Like a keen south gale,
 When the lightnings fail,
 His fury is o'er.
 Now, sober again,
 He feels new pain ;
 For to behold harms of one's own hands' doing, 260
 Where none beside has wrought, causes sharp ruing.

I MARINER

But I suppose that all may yet be well,
 If they have ceased ; for lesser is the count
 Of ill that's past already.

TECMESSA

Would you choose,
 If choice were free, to have delights yourself,
 Vexing your friends, or in their company
 To be tormented, share for share, as they are ?

I MARINER

The twofold evil is the greater, lady.

TECMESSA

Then are we sufferers, now the plague is past.

I MARINER

How say you so? I know not what you say. 270

TECMESSA

The man we speak of, when he was diseased,
Himself had pleasure from his malady,
Whilst we, in our right minds, were pained for him;
Now, since he rose and breathed, freed from his madness,
He has been all distracted with sore grief,
And we are left no lighter than before.
Is not this trouble doubly multiplied?

I MARINER

I am of your opinion; and I fear
Some heaven-sent stroke may have come on him. How else,
If, being made whole, he is no more at ease
Than when he was in sickness? 280

TECMESSA

Thus it is,
You may be well assured.

I MARINER

How did the evil
First light upon him? Tell us what has happened;
We grieve with you.

TECMESSA

You shall hear all that passed,
Being sharers in the event. At dead of night,
When the evening camp-fires now no longer blazed,
He grasped his two-edged weapon, and seemed bent
To sally upon some errand, objectless.
I, in surprise, said to him "What dost thou, Ajax?
Why thus unsummoned either by the voice
Of messengers, or any trumpet-call, 290
Goest thou forth? Now the whole host is sleeping!"
But he replied briefly and in cant phrase;
"Woman, a woman should be seen, not heard."
I held my tongue, and he rushed forth alone.

What there befell him truly I cannot say ;
But he came in and brought, bound all together,
Bulls, herdmen's dogs and fleecy spoil of sheep.
Some he beheaded ; of some, their heads bent upward,
He cut the throats and clave the chines in twain,
And some he bound and tortured, as if human,
(Though it was cattle he fell on ;) and at last 300
Rushing out through the door he hurled up words
To a phantom, some against the Atridæ, some
About Ulysses, laughing loud and long
At all the outrage he had wreaked on them ;
Then darting back into the hut, once more
Hardly and by degrees he comes to reason ;
When looking on the chamber filled with havoc
He shrieked, and smote his head. Then he sat down,
Flinging himself among the weltering wrack
Of sheep that he had butchered, and clutched hold
Upon his hair with his clenched fists. Since then, 310
Most of the time he sat, uttering no sound ;
After, he threatened me—'twas terrible !
If I disclosed not all that had befallen,
And questioned me, what could have come to him.
O friends, in fear, I told him the whole story,
So far as I well knew it. Instantly
He burst out crying lamentably—cries
Such as I never heard from him before.
For clamour of the kind, he ever taught,
Belonged to base and pusillanimous spirits ; 320
Rather, suppressing all shrill outcries, he
Would groan, low, like the rumbling of a bull.
Now, prostrate under such adversity,
He, without meat or drink, sits on the ground
Among the beasts his edge has dealt on, dumb.
And plain it is he meditates no good ;
That way, at least, his words and wailings tend.
But O dear friends—for therefore was my errand—
Come in and help us, if by any means
You have the power ; for such men as he
Are conquered by the counsels of a friend.

I MARINER

Tecmessa—daughter of Teleutas—this
Is evil news you bring us—that your lord
Has been driven quite beside himself with trouble!

AJAX (*within*)

Woe, woe is me!

TECMESSA

It seems the trouble will be worse anon.
Did you not hear the voice of Ajax crying?

AJAX (*within*)

Woe, woe is me!

I MARINER

The man seems either to be mad, or grieved
By presence of his former madness.

AJAX (*within*)

Here,

My boy, my boy!

TECMESSA

Me miserable! Eurysaces, 'tis thee 340
He calls for! What is in his mind? Where art thou?
Unhappy that I am!

AJAX (*within*)

Teucer I want!

Where's Teucer? Will he never have done foraying?
And I—am perishing!

I MARINER

The man appears
To be of sound mind. Open, there! Perhaps
He may be moved, even at the sight of me.

TECMESSA

Here, I will open. You can see his work;
And in what present plight he finds himself.

The Scene opens, and discovers AJAX among the slain animals.

AJAX

O friends, O sailors good,
Faithful alone among the faithless found, 350
Behold me, by what storm-driven surge of blood
I am encompassed round!

I MARINER

It seems, alas, your words are all too true.
How mad the work, it may itself shew clearly.

AJAX

O comrades, who with me
Plied the oar-blade, your mariner's craft, o'er sea,
You are my stay, you only, against my pain! 360
Come, slay me—as these are slain!

I MARINER

Speak not so rashly. Cure not ill with ill,
Embittering all the mischief that is done.

AJAX

Dost thou behold
How I, stout heart and bold,
I, the undaunted once in open battle,
Lay violent hands on unsuspecting cattle?
Alas for scorn! How am I put to shame!

TECMESSA

Pray, my lord Ajax, do not say these things!

AJAX

Away, take yourself hence! Alas, alas! 370

TECMESSA

O, in Heaven's name, yield to me and be wise!

AJAX

Woe, woe is me,
That let slip through my hands the slaves of destiny,
And falling among horned kine, and goat-flocks good,
Let out their turbid blood!

I MARINER

Why will you grieve over what's past and done?
It cannot now be altered, not to be.

AJAX

Ah Lartius' son!
Ah thou all-spying one!
Thou of all ills the ever-willing tool!
Thou most foul knave, making the host thy fool!

380

I warrant thou art laughing loud for joy.

I MARINER

As the God wills, every man laughs, and mourns.

AJAX

Wreck as I am, would that I could but see him!
O woe is me!

I MARINER

Speak mildly. See you not your evil case?

AJAX

O Zeus most high,
Forefather of my forefathers, would that, having slain
That wiliest hateful villain, and those monarchs twain,
Myself might lastly die!

390

TECMESSA

When you pray that, pray that I too may perish;
For why should I be living, and you dead?

AJAX

O darkness, now my light,
O gloom to me most bright,
Take me, yea take me for your habitant:
Take me! for I can brook
No longer now to look
Either to God or mortal, in my want.
Nay, rather upon me
The strong divinity,
Daughter of Jove, destructive torment sends;
Then what escape is best?
Where should I turn for rest,
Now that my former fame is fading, friends,

400

And retribution follows instantly,
 And here I sit, with my ridiculous prey,
 And the whole host will aim a dart at me,
 Once and again, to slay?

TECMESSA

O misery, that a man so good should speak 410
 Thus—as he never would have deigned, before!

AJAX

Ye ways where surges roar,
 Sea caves and green-clad shore,
 Ye kept me for a long long time indeed
 Lying Troy's walls beneath;
 But now—no more in breath;
 No more; a riddle that the wise may read.
 O streams that take your course
 Down from Scamander's source,
 You kindly neighbours to the Argive host, 420
 Through all futurity
 You ne'er again shall see
 The face of one, who utters now this boast,
 That of all those from Grecian soil who came
 Troy saw no other soldier such as I,
 Who notwithstanding, put to open shame,
 Upon the ground here lie!

I MARINER

I have no voice to stay you, no, nor yet
 To bid you speak, fallen in such miseries.

AJAX

Ah, who would have supposed it possible 430
 The name I bear should ever be attuned
 To these misfortunes! Doubly, trebly now
 May I lament; such ills have come on me;
 Whose father in these coasts of Ida once
 Won the first prize for valour of the host,
 And to his home returned all gloriously;
 While I, his son, who with no meaner power
 Invaded this same tract of Troy, nor less
 Myself exhibited of prowess, thus,
 Being dishonoured by the Argives, perish! 440

And yet this much, truly, I think I know ;
That if Achilles were himself alive,
And had to choose, concerning his own arms,
To whom the prize of excellence was due,
No other would have snatched it, over me.
But now the Atridæ have by practice wrought
For an unscrupled villain, and passed over
The might of this right hand. Had but mine eyesight—
Had but my counsels swerved not in their aim,
They should have had no second cause to judge,
As they judged mine ! 'Twas the unmastered Power, 450
Jove's grim-eyed daughter, that illuded me,
There as I stood, raising my hand to smite them,
Casting upon me a sick frenzy-fit,
So that my hands were reddened with the blood
Of these poor cattle ! And they laugh at me ;
Having escaped—not as I meant for them.
Yes ; if some deity must interfere,
The bad will scape the better. As things are,
What must I do ? whom plainly the Gods hate,
Whom the Hellenian host abominate,
Whom all Troy loathes, ay and these stones of it !
Shall I abandon the ship's anchorage, 460
Leave the Atridæ in the lurch, and pass
Homeward, across the Ægean ? And what visage
Shall I display, when I appear before
My father, Telamon ? How will he endure
To look upon me in his presence, bare,
Void of the honours wherein he himself
Gained a great crown of glory ? It may not be.
Then shall I march against the fence of Troy,
Fall, singlehanded, only on the foe,
And, after some good service, lastly die ?
That is the way to please the Atridæ, though.
It is impossible. Some enterprise 470
Must be sought out, by which to manifest
To my old father that, in heart at least,
Not wholly nerveless I descend from him.
It is a shame to crave long life, when troubles

Allow a man no respite. What delight
Bring days, one with another, setting down
Or putting off merely our date of death?
I would not take the fellow at a gift
Who warms himself with unsubstantial hopes ;
But bravely to live on, or bravely end,
Is due to gentle breeding. I have said. ✓ 480

I MARINER

That not heart-felt, but feigning, are the words
Which you have spoken, Ajax, none will say.
Still, pause an instant ; let these fancies be,
And suffer friends to master your resolve.

TECMESSA

O my lord Ajax, in the lot of men
Nothing is harder than Necessity.
I was descended of a sire free-born,
Strong in his wealth, if ever Phrygian was ;
And now, I am a slave. So the Gods willed it,
And thy right hand determined. Coming thus 490
Unto thy bed, I am on thy side, now.
And I beseech thee by our household Jove,
And by thy couch, which thou hast shared with me,
Leave me not open to contemptuous talk
From thy foes' tongues, bequeathing me to be
Handmaid to some one ! For on that same day
On which thou diest, and dying put'st me from thee,
Think how the Argives will lay violent hands
On me who, with thy son, must thenceforth eat
The bread of bondage ! And some master then, 500
With bitter phrases aiming at my ear,
Will word me—"Look at Ajax' concubine !
His, who was once the mightiest of the host ;
What servitude, after such height of envy,
Is come on her !" Such things will some one say,
And I shall be the sport of destiny,
But thee and thine these sayings will bring to shame.
O tremble, ere in sorrowful old age

Thou leav'st thy father—leav'st thy mother, too,
 Who has seen so many years, and oft to Heaven
 Is praying for thy return in safety home!
 And pity, O king, thy son—if he, bereft 510
 Of childish nurture, must survive alone,
 Under unfriendly guardians—what sore trouble
 Is this which, when thou diest, thou minist'rest
 To him and me? For I no longer know
 To whom to look, save thee; my native land
 Thy spear destroyed; and yet another stroke
 Brought low my mother and my sire, to be
 Inhabitants of Hades with the dead.
 What home, then, could supply thy place to me?
 What wealth? All my existence is in thee.
 Have thou some care for me. Some mindfulness 520
 A man should surely keep, of any thing
 That pleased him once. Kindness is kindness' mother;
 Nor can we count him gentle any more,
 Whose memory fails him of a benefit.

I MARINER

Ajax, I wish that you felt pity at heart
 As I do; then you would approve her words.

AJAX

Approval she shall have from me—at least
 If she resolves to do my bidding well.

TECMESSA

O my dear Ajax, wholly I obey.

AJAX

Bring me my son at once, that I may see him. 530

TECMESSA

I was afraid, and let him go away.

AJAX

During these troubles, was it? Or what mean you?

TECMESSA

Lest he should meet you and be killed, poor child !

AJAX

Truly it would have matched my fortunes well !

TECMESSA

Oh but I watched well, and prevented it.

AJAX

Praised be the work, and your good providence !

TECMESSA

How can I be of service to you now ?

AJAX

Give me a sight of and a word with him.

TECMESSA

Yes. He is in the servants' charge, hard by.

AJAX

Why is he not yet here, though ?

540

TECMESSA

Here, my boy,
Your father calls you. Bring him hither, you,
Whichever of the men is minding him.

AJAX

Lags he behind, or comes he at your call ?

TECMESSA

Oh yes, the servant here is bringing him.

Enter Servant with EURYSACES.

AJAX

Lift him up, lift him hither ; he will not quail
To gaze upon this slaughter freshly wrought,
If he be mine of right paternity.
He must begin, now, to be broken in

To the rough fashions of his father's way,
And grow the same in nature. O my son, 550
May you be luckier than your father! else
As good as he was; and you will do bravely.
Ay, and already I could well envy you,
Because you have no inkling of these troubles;
The happiest life consists in ignorance—
[For ignorance is a right painless ill]
Before you learn to grieve and to rejoice;
But, when you are come to it, it will be for you
To approve, upon your father's enemies,
Your birth and breeding. Gentle airs, meanwhile,
Give thee repast; dally with infancy,
And be thy mother's darling! Well I know
There is no Greek will try to injure thee 560
With foul reproach, though thou be fatherless;
So watchful is the guardian I shall leave
About thee—Teucer—tireless in thy care,
Albeit now, chasing the common foe,
He wanders far. Seamen and shield-bearers!
To you as well do I commit this charge,
And tell him my behest; to take this boy
Home, and present him there to Telamon,
And Eriboea my mother; let him be
The unremitting solace of their age, 570
[Till they attain the shades of death below.]
And for my arms—they shall not be a stake
Set for the Argives, by some arbiter—
By him, my bane! Eurysaces, my son—
Take it—the broad impenetrable shield
Of seven-fold hide, from which thou hast thy name,
And in the knotted cordage of the loop
Entwine thy grasp. The rest shall share my grave.
—Now take the boy away immediately;
Make the house fast, and raise no noise of crying
At the tent door. 'Tis a most piteous thing, 580
Truly—a woman! Quicker, fasten it!
He's but a sorry leech, who mutters spells
Over a sore that must be cut away!

I MARINER

I do not like the tone of this resolve.
It is no pleasure that your tongue is keen.

TECMESSA

O my lord Ajax, what is thine intent?

AJAX

Ask not: enquire not. Self-restraint is good.

TECMESSA

O how my spirit sinks! In thy child's name
And Heaven's, I supplicate, betray us not!

AJAX

Thou art too troublesome. Art ignorant 589
That, once for all, I have cleared scores with Heaven?

TECMESSA

Speak not so rashly!

AJAX

Talk to those who listen!

TECMESSA

Will not thou hearken?

AJAX

Far too much already
Hast thou complained.

TECMESSA

Because I fear, my king.

AJAX

Take her and shut her up immediately.

TECMESSA

Relent, for Heaven's sake!

AJAX

I must think thee fool,
To deem that thou canst school my temper, now.

*The Scene closes on AJAX, TECMESSA, EURYSACES and the
servant.*

Chorus.

I. 1.

Fair Salamis, where sea-waves roar
 Thou dwell'st, methinks, at peace;
 And ever glorious is thy shore
 Among the sons of Greece;
 Poor I, for many a weary day, 600
 Tarry, each night, on Ida's grass,
 Watching the countless seasons pass,
 Worn by the long delay;
 Comfortless—reckless—hopeless, save
 In the drear prospect of the looming Grave.

I. 2.

And Ajax, deaf to all relief,
 A frenzy-haunted man,
 Stands by to renovate my grief; 610
 Whom, when the war began,
 Thou didst send forth, a prince in fight;
 But now he broods in heart, alone,
 A deep affliction to his own;
 The triumphs of his might
 Seem hostile all to hostile eyes; 620
 The sons of Atreus see them, and despise.

II. 1.

Surely the mother, in her close of day,
 She that did rear him, aged now, and grey,
 When she shall hear his madness whispered nigh,
 "Woe woe!" will be her cry!
 No plaintive murmur of the nightingale,
 No querulous bird-like wail,
 But piercing notes will echo through the air, 630
 Loud beatings of her breast, and rendings of her hoary hair.

II. 2.

Better in Hades, hidden from the day,
 Were he, the man whose wits are far astray,
 Who by ancestral lineage towering most
 O'er the whole toil-worn host,
 No longer in his moods remains unchanged,
 But walks as one estranged. 640
 Unhappy sire! what ruin of thine own son
 Awaits thine ear! save him, to thee and thy whole race unknown.

Enter AJAX, with a drawn sword.

AJAX

All things obscure the slow uncounted hours
Bring forth to light, and cover all things plain;
And nothing is so strange it may not be,
But the stern oath—ay, and the stubborn mind 650
Yield. Even I, that was so stout of late—
Yea, hard as tempered steel, before yon woman
Felt my keen edge of resolution turned
To feminine softness; and it pities me
To leave her widow and my child fatherless
Among their foes. But I will take my way
Down to the meadows by the shore, and bathe,
So I may cleanse my soilure, and escape
The heavy wrath of Her, the Deity;
And passing onward till I reach some spot
Untrodden, I will bury this my sword—
Weapon most hostile—digging in the earth
Where none shall see; let Night and Hades there 660
Keep it, below! For from the hour I gat
This gift from Hector, my arch-enemy,
Never one boon, from Argives, did I gather:
But that is a true proverb which men use,
“A foe’s gifts are no gifts,” and profit not.
—Wherefore in future we must learn to bend
Before the Gods, and try to reverence
The sons of Atreus. They are lords of us,
And we must needs give way to them. How else?
For even things terrible and exceeding strong
Do homage to the worthier; thus is it 670
Snow-laden winters pass away before
Fair-fruited summer-time; Night’s gloomy round
Gives place anon to the white steeds of Day
To blaze with lustre; the fell blast of winds
Can make cessation in the roaring main;
And Sleep, the universal vanquisher,
Sets free the captives he hath bound, at last.
And who are we, that we should not learn wisdom?

I for my own part, having learnt of late
 Those hateful to us are not to be hated
 As though they might not soon be friends again, 680
 Intend to measure, now, the services
 I render to my friend, as if not so
 To abide for ever; for of mortals most
 Find friendship an unstable anchorage.
 But as to these things all shall now be well;
 Only do thou, woman, betake thee in,
 And pray the Gods fully to grant fulfilment
 Of what my heart desires; and you, my comrades,
 Grant me the self-same favour equally,
 And signify to Teucer, if he come,
 To care for us, and to be good to you.
 For I am going thither, where I must go; 690
 But do ye as I bid you, and perchance
 Ye may soon hear that I have gained, in spite
 Of present evil, safe deliverance.

*Exit.**Chorus.*

I.

I flutter in transport, I thrill with delight!
 Pan, what ho!—Pan, what ho!
 Hither from the rocky height
 Cyllenian, beat by snow,
 O Pan, sea-faring Pan,
 Appear, appear!
 King of Gods who lead the measure,
 Be present here!
 Begin the round that winds at pleasure,
 Nysian or Cnosian; 700
 For now would I be dancing;
 And across the Icarian sea
 Let the Delos-born, advancing,
 King Apollo, visibly
 Stand by me, and in all things favour me!

II.

Lo, Ares disperses a gloom from our eyes!
 Now again—now again

Cause the sun-light to arise,
 And white days, free from pain,
 O'er the swift careering fleet,
 O Zeus most high !
 Now that Ajax, his distresses
 Anew laid by,
 All worship to the Gods addresses,
 Honouring them, as is most meet.
 'Tis a long road knows no turning,
 And there's nothing may not be,
 Now, from choler and heart-burning
 Huge, against the Atreïdæ,
 Ajax relents so unexpectedly.

710

Enter a Messenger.

MESSENGER

Friends, I would first announce—Teucer is here,
 Straight from the Mysian heights; and entering in
 To the assembly, is being set upon
 By the Argives, all together. Having heard
 That he was coming, they surrounded him
 As he stepped forward, in a ring; and then
 Assailed him with reproaches, right and left,
 Not one of them excepted; styling him
 “Kin to the madman, the conspirator
 “Against the host, he should not come off clear,
 Short of being stoned to death!” It went so far,
 Swords leaped to hands, drawn from their sheaths, already,
 When the dispute, though it had run past bounds,
 Ended, at instance of the seniors.
 But where is Ajax, to receive my story?
 One must report things to one's officers.

720

731

I MARINER

He is not within; he has fitted his changed will
 To a changed way, and is but now gone forth.

MESSENGER

Heigh ho !
 Either my sender on this errand, then,
 Sent me too late, or I am proved a laggard !

I MARINER

Why, what is lacking in this urgency?

740

MESSENGER

Teucer enjoined he should by no means pass
Forth of the hut, before himself was present.

I MARINER

He is gone, I tell you; his intention turned
To the best of ends, that he may be relieved
From the Gods' wrath.

MESSENGER

These words are full of folly,
If Calchas justly can at all divine.

I MARINER

To what effect? What does he know of it?

MESSENGER

This much I know, for I was present there.
Out from the council and the circle of kings
Calchas apart from the Atridæ drew,
Put hand in Teucer's in a friendly fashion,
And spake, and charged him, for this very day
That we now see, by all means to confine
Ajax indoors—not let him have his freedom,
If he would ever look on him alive.
For, he went on to say, on this day only
The wrath of great Athena persecutes him.
“For lives presumptuous and unprofitable
End, under sore mishaps of Heaven's contriving,”
The seer declared, “whenever one born human
Ceases to think as fits humanity.
Now he, the moment he set out from home,
In answer to his father's good advice,
Proved himself void of sense; for he said to him,
'Son, at the spear's point seek thou victory;
'But seek it, always, with the blessing of God.'
But he replied vainly and vauntingly;

750

760

'My father, backed by Gods, a man worth nothing
 'Might win the day; but by the hair I trust
 'To pluck this glory, though they stand aloof.'
 So high he boasted; then again, in answer 770
 To great Athena, when she cheered him on,
 Saying 'Turn thy hand upon the foe, and slay,'
 Straight he returned her back a perilous word,
 Unmeet for utterance: 'Queen, stand thou behind
 'The other Argives; where we keep the ring,
 'The battle never shall break out of it!'
 He by such words has from the Goddess earned
 Implacable wrath at his o'erweening pride;
 But if he is alive this day, perhaps—
 God willing—we may be his saviours."
 So far the seer; and Teucer instantly 780
 From the assembly sent me with this charge
 For you to follow. But if I have failed,
 And Calchas dotes not, Ajax lives no more.

I MARINER

O miserable Tecmessa! Come and see—
 Poor child!—what news this fellow is telling us!
 It will go hard but this will cause some sorrow.

Enter TECMESSA.

TECMESSA

Why do you rouse me from my seat again,
 Weary, just eased from my persistent griefs?

I MARINER

Hearken to this man, how he brings with him
 News about Ajax which distresses me. 790

TECMESSA

O sir, what say you? Are we ruined indeed?

MESSENGER

I know not your condition; but of Ajax—
 If now abroad, I am not sure of him.

TECMESSA

He is abroad; and I—in agony
To hear you!

MESSENGER

Teucer gives command, to keep him
Within the tent, not let him forth alone.

TECMESSA

And where is Teucer, and what makes him say it?

MESSENGER

He is just arrived; and he suspects, if Ajax
Go forth just now, 'twill be the death of him.

TECMESSA

Me miserable! Who could have told him so? 800

MESSENGER

The soothsayer, Thestor's son, who on this day
Makes prophecy of life or death to him.

TECMESSA

Alas, O friends, stand between me and ruin!
And hurry, some, for Teucer to come quickly,
And some the western, some the eastward bays
Seek, and search out the unlucky track of him.
For now I see my lord has cheated me,
And from his old affection cast me out.
O me, what shall I do, child? not stand idle!
Follow I will, wherever I am able. 810
Let us begone, let us be busy; this
Is no time to sit still, when we are trying
To save a man that's rushing on his death.

I MARINER

I am off, and not in word alone; I'll shew it;
For speed of act, and of feet too, shall follow.

Exeunt.

*The scene changes to a lonely part of the sea-shore. Enter
AJAX, who fixes his sword in the ground.*

AJAX

Now he stands fast, my executioner ;
Most trenchant so—if there were leisure left
To reason about it ; being, first, Hector's gift,
The most unwelcome foeman to my sight
And worst detested ; he is fixed, besides,
In hostile soil, the Troad ; newly edged
Upon the whetting-stone that feeds on steel ; 820
And I myself fixed him, and set him well,
Of my quick death a most kind instrument !
So we are ready ; and in due course thou first,
Zeus, as is right, befriend me ! I shall demand
No mighty boon of thee ; send us some herald
To carry the ill news to Teucer's ear,
(A) That he may raise me, first, where I have fallen
Upon this sword, while my blood reeks on it,
Lest I be seen first by some enemy,
And be cast out, a prey for dogs and fowl, 830
Headlong. So much, Zeus, I implore of thee.
Hermes, our convoy to the under-world,
Alike I summon ; when upon this blade
(B) With no distracted or irresolute leap
I force a mortal passage through my side,
Give me good rest ! And to my aid I call
The Erinyes, with slow persistent feet,
Stern, virgin ever, ever witnessing
(C) All sufferings among mortals, to regard 840
How I by the Atridæ's malice perish !
Whom let them seize on most perniciously,
Pernicious and abandoned utterly,
Even as they see me abandoned. Up,
You swift avenging Furies, glut yourselves,
Spare nothing, on the general host !—Thou too,
Driving thy chariot up the steep of heaven,
When thou revisitest my native land,

Sun, draw thy gilded rein, and tell of me,
 My woes and ruin, to the old man my sire, 850
 And that unhappy dame who nurtured me.
 How will that sad one utter loud laments
 To the whole city, when she hears this tale!
 But idle wailings are of no use now;
 I must to work, and briskly. O Death, Death,
 Come, look me in the face! And yet with thee
 I can hold converse when I meet thee, there;
 But you, the instant beams of shining day
 And the careering Sun, once more I name,
 And ye shall never hear my voice again. 860
 O Light! O sacred soil of Salamis
 My native land! O altar of my home!
 Thou glorious Athens, and thy sons, my playmates,
 You springs, you rivers here, and plains of Troy—
 You I address—Comrades of mine, farewell!
 This his last word Ajax bestows on you;
 The next is greeting to the Shades below.

Falls on his sword and dies.

Enter the first Semi-Chorus.

1 MARINER

Every pother
 Brings another
 Following hard upon its brother.
 For where, where, where have I been?
 Where have I not?
 And there's never a spot
 Knows of my knowing as well what it hath seen.

Hilloa! I hear a noise, once more. 870

Enter the second Semi-Chorus.

2 MARINER

Hilloa!

Only ourselves, your shipmates.

1 MARINER

Well, what cheer?

2 MARINER

West of the fleet we have scoured the country-side.

1 MARINER

And have you found?

2 MARINER

Plenty of trouble, truly ;
And nothing more to see.

1 MARINER

Nor eastward, neither,
In any quarter, is the man in sight.

Chorus

Is there no fisher bent on toil,
Busied all night in quest of some sea-spoil, 880
Is there no Goddess from the Olympian hill,
No Nymph of any Bosphorus-feeding rill,
To tell if they have seen our rude-souled king
Anywhere wandering?
'Tis hard for me,
Roving about so long and painfully,
Never to hail him with a favouring breeze,
Nor even sight the madman, where on earth he is ! 890

TECMESSA (*behind*)

O me unhappy !

1 MARINER

Hark ! whose cry was that
Came from the grove close to us ?

TECMESSA (*behind*)

Woe is me !

1 MARINER

I see the ill-fated bride, our prisoner,
Tecmessa 'tis, who has been thus whelmed in grief.

TECMESSA

I faint, I die ! Friends, I am all undone !

I MARINER

What is it ?

TECMESSA

Here is Ajax newly slain,
Lying in a heap, with a sword under him.

Chorus

O my far home, I may not see again !
Oh, thou didst kill, my chief,
Me, O rash heart, thy comrade on the main !
O woman full of grief !

900

TECMESSA

Yes, here he lies ; and we may wail for him.

I MARINER

By whose hand could he do it, hapless one ?

TECMESSA

By his own, plainly ; planted in the ground,
This sword on which he lies, accuses him.

Chorus

O my hard luck ! Why shed thy life-blood thus,
Devoid of help from us ?
And I the utter dullard, utter dunce,
Never guessed once !—
Where lies our Ajax ? where
The man of boding name, immitigable by prayer ?

910

TECMESSA

He is not for your sight. Rather, I will shroud him,
From head to foot, in this enfolding robe ;
For nobody that loved him could endure
To look upon him, spouting livid blood

Out at his nostrils, and from the red wound
 Of his self-ministered murder.—O my heart! 920
 What shall I do?—Who, of all friends, shall raise thee?—
 Where's Teucer? Ah how timely, if he came,
 Would he arrive now, to compose the limbs
 Of this his brother who has perished! O
 Unhappy Ajax! Whither, from what state,
 Art thou now fallen! how worthy to receive
 Tribute of mourning even from enemies!

Chorus

Was this thy meaning, this—
 At last—rashly obdurate—to fulfil
 An evil doom of infinite miseries?
 For this, all night, and in the daylight, still, 930
 O ruthless heart, didst thou send out thy groans,
 Defying Atreus' sons
 In thy despair?
 Truly that hour was author large of woes,
 When for the arms [Achilles used to wear]
 Strife of the bravest hearts and foremost hands arose!

TECMESSA

Ah, woe for me!

I MARINER

Sorrow so notable
 Goes to the heart, I know.

TECMESSA

Woe, woe for me!

I MARINER

I well believe you might cry woe twice over, 940
 Lady, being just bereft of such a lover!

TECMESSA

It is for you to think, for me to feel.

I MARINER

I own it.

TECMESSA

Ah my child, under what yoke
Of bondage—to what taskmasters we go !

Chorus

Oh, thou art prophesying of distress
Nameless—in this lament ;
Work of the twins of Atreus, pitiless !
Which may some God prevent !

TECMESSA

But for the Gods it had not happened thus. 950

I MARINER

They wrought a sorrow far too sore to bear.

TECMESSA

Jove's awful daughter, Pallas, brings to pass,
To please Ulysses, all this misery.

Chorus

Now he exults in his black-visaged mood,
The man of patient blood,
And laughs loud laughter at these frenzied griefs ;
And with him the high chiefs—
Woe, woe is me !
Are laughing as they hear, the twin Atreïdæ. 960

TECMESSA

So let them laugh, and glory in this man's ruin.
Perhaps, though living they would none of him,
In the spear's press they may bewail him, dead.
Men of perverse opinion do not know
The excellence of what is in their hands,
Till some one dash it from them. Sweet to them,
Bitter it is to me, that he is dead ;
While for himself 'tis pleasant. For of that
Which he desired, he did possess himself,
Death, as he willed it. Therefore over him

Why should they triumph? He by Heaven's hand has
fallen, 970

Not by theirs, never! Let Ulysses, then,
Vainly exult; for Ajax is no more
Under their power, but is past beyond them—
Leaving me anguish, and laments for him.

TEUCER (*within*)

Woe, woe for me!

I MARINER

Hush! for I seem to hear
The voice of Teucer crying in a strain
Not dissonant with this calamity.

Enter TEUCER.

TEUCER

O dearest Ajax, O my kinsman true,
And hast thou fared as the report prevails?

I MARINER

Of that be sure, Teucer; the man is dead.

TEUCER

Alack therefore, for my so heavy chance! 980

I MARINER

Since it is so—

TEUCER

Alas, alas for me!

I MARINER

There's room to groan.

TEUCER

O overhasty blow!

I MARINER

Too hasty, Teucer.

TEUCER

Out, alas—Ay surely,
What of his child? Where, in all Troia, is he?

I MARINER

Alone, by the tents.

TEUCER

Will you not fetch him, then,
With all speed hither, lest some enemy
Should snatch him up, like whelp of lioness
Reft of her mate? Go, hurry, lend a hand;
All use to insult over the prostrate dead.

I MARINER

Ay, Teucer; and indeed before he died
Our master left the charge to you, to watch
Over his offspring, which you now perform.

990

TEUCER

O of all sights that ever I surveyed
Most grievous! O of all my journeyings
The journey most afflicting to my breast,
On which I came but now, soon as I heard
Thy fate, O dearest Ajax—following thee,
And tracking out thy steps! For a swift rumour,
As from some God, of thee, how thou hadst perished,
Went throughout all the Achaians; hearing it, 1000
I, miserable, was groaning to myself
Yet being afar; now seeing, I am undone.
O woe is me! Go and uncover him,
That I may view the whole calamity.
O sight of horror and fell hardihood,
What sorrows has thy withering sown for me?
For whither—to what people—can I go,
Who never in thy troubles succoured thee?
Will Telamon, mine and thy father too,
As mildly, as benignly, welcome me,

Returning without thee? Much chance he will ; 1010
Whose wont it is not even when prosperous
Ever to smile at all more graciously.
What will he spare to utter? What reproach
Will he not lay on me—the bastard—me—
Child of the war-spear, who betrayed, through baseness,
Thee, dearest Ajax—yea through cowardice,
Or of design, that after thou wert dead
I might obtain thy lordship, and thy hall?
A man of choleric mood, sullen with age,
Will say such things, working himself up to quarrel
At nothing! And in the end, a banished man,
Bondman, for free, proclaimed, I shall be cast 1020
Out of the land. So shall I fare at home ;
And here in Troia many enemies
And scanty aids have I. And from thy death
I reap all this! Ah me, what shall I do?
How shall I drag thee off, O hapless one,
From this cruel gleaming point, by dint of which
Thou didst expire? Sawest thou how, in time,
Even though slain, Hector would slaughter thee?
In heaven's name, note the fortune of this pair!
Hector, to whom by this man it was given,
Pinned by a girdle to the chariot rings, 1030
Was torn along, till he breathed out his life ;
While Ajax, who accepted this from him,
By it has perished, falling on it, and dying.
Was not Eriny's forger of the blade,
And Hades of that girdle, craftsman dire?
These accidents, and everything beside,
Are snares, I would aver, Gods lay for men ;
Let him in whose opinion this sounds strangely
Keep of the other counsel: I keep mine.

I MARINER

Do not discourse at length ; only take thought 1040
How you will get this body under ground,
And what you have to plead ; for I behold

An adversary coming; one full likely
To triumph, like a caitiff, in mishap.

TEUCER

Which of the captains is it you espy?

I MARINER

Menelaus; he on whose account we sailed.

TEUCER

I see him; near, he is not hard to know.

Enter MENELAUS.

MENELAUS

Fellow, I forbid thee to lend hand to bear
That corpse out for the interring; let it lie.

TEUCER

What moves you to the expense of so much breath?

MENELAUS

My pleasure; his too, who commands the host. 1050

TEUCER

Please you to say what reason is alleged?

MENELAUS

Because we meant to bring him to the field
A friend and aider to the Achaian side,
And found him worse than Phrygian in the trial;
Who could contrive to murder the whole host,
And sally at night to put them to the sword;
And had not some God quenched his enterprise,
Ours had the lot been, which has fallen to him,
Now to lie dead, by a most shameful fate,
While he lived on. But as it is, a God

1060

Turned the encounter of his violence
On sheep and cattle. Wherefore, as for him,
There is no man possessed of so much power
As to entomb his body in a grave;
But cast out prone upon the yellow sands
To the seabirds he shall become a prey.
—Never uprear your crest and threaten me!
Even if we failed to govern him in life,
Even if he never would by any means
Hearken, while living, to a word of mine,
Our hands, at least, shall in despite of you
Hold and dispose of and control him dead. 1070
Yet is it factious, when a common man
Turns a deaf ear to those set over him.
For never in a city can the laws
Be well sustained, where reverence is impaired,
Nor can an army be discreetly ruled,
Having no bulwark of respect or shame.
No; though he swell his body to a size,
It is becoming to a man, to think
How by a little evil he may fall.
He who is modest—ay, and reverent—
Be well assured—is in security; 1080
But where excess and license range unstayed—
Deem of that city that, with all sails set,
It must at some time founder. Let me keep
Seasonable fear; and let us not suppose
That, doing merely what will give us pleasure,
We shall not pay by troubles in full measure.
These things wag on by turns. This man was once
A glorious braggart; it is my day now;
And I prohibit you to bury him,
Lest in so doing you dig yourself a grave. 1090

I MARINER

O Menelaus, do not you lay down
Maxims of wisdom, and become yourself
A scorner of the dead!

TEUCER

Sirs, for the future

I should not be surprised at any man
 Who, being naught by birth, behaves amiss,
 When those who seem to be of noble race
 Offend so widely in their oratory.
 Come now, repeat that preface; sayest thou
 Thou didst find him, and bring him, as ally
 To the Achaians hither? Sailed he not
 Forth of himself, in his own mastery?
 When wert thou made a captain over him?
 Where lies thy title to command the folk 1100
 He led to fight? As Sparta's king thou camest,
 Not as our master. There's no room to say
 It was laid down in any rule of state
 That thou shouldst order him, more than he thee.
 Another's officer thou sailedst hither,
 Not in command of the whole host, that thou
 Shouldst ever be to Ajax general.
 Rule those thou rulest, and find fault with them
 In good set terms; but this man, whether thou
 Or the other general prohibit it,
 I will deposit duly in the tomb,
 Unfrightened by your clamours. He, I tell you, 1110
 Not for your wife's sake ever went to war,
 Like some poor hind, laden with drudgery,
 But for the oath's that bound him: not at all
 For you; mere ciphers he regarded not!
 Now fetch more heralds, fetch your general,
 And then come on! For all your blustering,
 You being what you are, I will not waver.

I MARINER

I do not love such talk at all the more
 Amid misfortunes; hard words carry a sting,
 Though they be more than just.

MENELAUS

The bowman seems
To be—not humble. 1120

TEUCER

Yes, the art I practise
Is no mechanic art.

MENELAUS

Get you a shield,
And we shall see big boasting.

TEUCER

Lightly armed
I were a match for you in panoply.

MENELAUS

How fierce the spirit is, which is in your tongue!

TEUCER

Oh, with the right, high mettle is not amiss.

MENELAUS

Right is it, he, my murderer, should find favour?

TEUCER

Your murderer! that's curious, that you
Should be alive, when murdered!

MENELAUS

Yes, a God
Keeps me in life. But dead I were, for him.

TEUCER

Then don't dishonour Gods—if Gods have kept you.

MENELAUS

Is it I, who quarrel with Heaven's ordinance? 1130

TEUCER

Yes, if you come and hinder burials.

MENELAUS

Only of my own foes, I; for that's disgraceful.

TEUCER

Did Ajax ever rank among your foes?

MENELAUS

He hated me, and I him; and that you knew.

TEUCER

I know you robbed him, by your canvassing.

MENELAUS

What happened was the judges' fault, not mine.

TEUCER

Oh, many wrongs you might procure, you know,
By hidden arts of wronging.

MENELAUS

After that,

Some one shall dearly rue!

TEUCER

No more, I fancy,
Than we shall furnish cause for penitence.

MENELAUS

Look, in one word, he is not to be buried.

1140

TEUCER

I say, he shall be buried instantly!

MENELAUS

Once I beheld a man in language brave
Who egged on seamen in a storm to sail,

Who had no power of utterance left in him,
 When he was caught in the storm's violence;
 But crept under a blanket, and gave leave
 To any of the crew to trample on him.
 And so thee also, and thy brawling tongue,
 From a small cloud out-blowing, some great storm
 May come to quell, for all thy clamorousness.

TEUCER

So too have I set eyes upon a man 1150
 So full of folly, that he made a mock
 Of troubles of his neighbours; and then one
 Answering to me, and like me in his mood,
 Looking upon him, said a word like this;
 "Sir, do not wrong the dead; for if you do,
 You certainly will have to pay for it!"
 In such wise did he caution, to his face,
 A man misguided. And that man I see;
 And 'tis no other, as appears to me,
 Than thou thyself. Is not my riddle easy?

MENELAUS

I am going. It is disgraceful to be heard
 Chiding with words, when it is in one's power
 To use compulsion.

1160
Exit.

TEUCER

Go thy ways. To me
 It is the worst disgrace to have to hear
 A shallow man, prating sheer foolishness.

Chorus

This great strife approaches an issue.
 Only, O Teucer, with all speed hasten
 Some deep hollow to find, where Ajax
 May in his grave have rest—by mortals
 Unforgotten—his mouldering grave.

TECMESSA *comes forward with* EURYSACES.

TEUCER

And in good time here are his wife and child,
 Waiting to deck a tomb for the poor corpse. 1170
 Come hither, boy; stand near, and put thy hand
 On the sire's form who gat thee, suppliant-wise,
 And seat thee as in sanctuary, and hold
 Locks of her hair, and mine, and of thine own,
 For votive offerings. And if by force
 Any of the host should tear thee from this body,
 Evil, in evil, may he be cast out,
 And find no burial, utterly cut off
 Down to the root of his whole family,
 Even as I shear this curl. Here, take it, boy;
 And keep it, and let no man make thee stir; 1180
 Kneel there; hold fast! And do not you stand round,
 Like women, and not men; but second us,
 Till I take order for his funeral—
 Though nobody permits me—and return.

*Exit.**Chorus*

I. 1.

When, ah when will come relief?
 When will end
 All the tale of tortured years—
 Years that send
 Over me their waves of doom
 Without cease,
 Labours, brandishing of spears,
 As I roam
 Over Troy's wide plain, the grief 1190
 And shame of Greece?

I. 2.

O that into the dim vast
 Of the wind,
 Or the common gulf of life,
 He had past
 Long before, the Greek who first
 Openly

Taught the art of arms accurst—
 Public strife—
 Toils on toils, alas! for he
 Hath ruined mankind!

II. 1.

He made me to be a stranger to the joys
 Of the flower-coronal, of the wine-cup deep; 1200
 He robbed me cruelly of the sweet flute-noise,
 And barred me from the nightly pleasure of sleep;
 Yea from love, woe is me, from love he severed me;
 And all uncared for, here I lie—my hair
 Steeped in thick falling dews continually—
 Bethinking me of Troy, the causer of my care. 1210

II. 2.

And Ajax' arm hitherto shielded me
 From hostile weapons, and the fears of night;
 But now he yields to a dark destiny;
 And what is left—what, that can give delight?
 O that I stood where sea-washed promontories
 O'erhang the deep, under the beetling shore 1220
 Of Sunium's woods, so I might hail Her glories,
 And waft one welcoming word to sacred ATHENS o'er!

Enter TEUCER.

TEUCER

I came with haste, seeing the general,
 Agamemnon, hurrying hither: it is plain,
 Sinister threats he means to launch at us.

Enter AGAMEMNON.

AGAMEMNON

Is it you, they tell me, with impunity
 Venture to snarl in this fierce fashion at me,
 You, I repeat, the captive woman's child?
 Had but your mother been well-born, methinks
 You would have boasted loftily indeed,
 And gone your gates on tiptoe, when, being nothing, 1230
 You stand against me on behalf of one
 Who is as nothing; swearing that I came

Neither as general nor admiral
 To you, or the Achaïans, but, you tell me,
 Himself being in command Ajax set sail!
 Is not this monstrous for a serf to say?
 What was the man, of whom you have croaked out
 Such insolence? On what service did he go,
 What post did he maintain, where I was missing?
 Are there no men among the Greeks but he?
 To our cost, seemingly, did we proclaim
 Contests to the Argives for Achilles' arms, 1240
 If, come what will, Teucer is to call us villains,
 And even when beaten you will never deign
 To accept the general judgment of the Court,
 But either go on pelting with abuse,
 Or slyly trying to stab us, when you lose!
 With such behaviour there can never be
 Establishing of any ordinance,
 If we must thrust out those who rightly win
 To bring the hindmost forward. But all this
 Must be kept under; for the trustiest men 1250
 Are not the broad of breast and shoulder-blade;
 But the well-judging everywhere prevail;
 And underneath the lash, light though it be,
 The big-ribbed ox plods straight along the way.
 Which same corrective shortly, I perceive,
 Except you pick up some sagacity,
 Will visit you; who for a man that now
 No longer is, but is become a shade,
 Swagger your fill and spit out insolence!
 Will you not be discreet? Will you not mind
 Your own extraction, and—bring in with you
 Some other man, free born, to say your say 1260
 Before us, in your stead? Since, when you talk,
 I cannot comprehend you; in a word,
 I have not learnt the outlandish dialect!

I MARINER

Would that you both had wit to be discreet—
 Since better may not be to say to you.

TEUCER

Alas, how quick the gratitude in men
Fades and is found a traitor to the dead,
If this man, here, not even in small measure,
Ajax, retains a memory of thee,
For whom thou hast done good service in the fight
Often, and to the spear proffered thy life! 1270
Truly all these things are past and thrown aside.
—Thou prater of unprofitable talk,
Dost thou no longer recollect the time
When, shut up close behind your battlements,
Just in extremity of overthrow,
Ajax, unaided, came and rescued you,
The fire already blazing all about
The topmost rowers' benches of the fleet,
And Hector in mid leap upon the hulls
Over your trenches? Who averted that?
Was it not Ajax did it, who, thou sayest, 1280
Nowhere so much as stirred one step to aid?
Do you confess he did his duty there?
And when again he singly, in single fight,
Chosen by lot, and of his own free will,
Entered the lists with Hector,—when the lot
He cast into the midst no skulker proved,
No lump of sodden soil, but such as promised
Lightly to leap first from the crested helm—
’Twas he that did it! And I too was there,
The serf, the foreign mother’s progeny—
Wretch, with what forehead dar’st thou mutter it? 1290
Hast thou forgot thy grandsire’s parentage,
Old Pelops, a barbarian Phrygian born?
Or Atreus, who begat thee—how he served
His brother a most execrable meal
Of his own children? Thou thyself wert born
Son of a Cretan mother, whose father found
A strange lover in her arms, and packed her off,
Food for the fishes! And dost thou, being such,

Taunt with his origin a man like me,
 Sprung on the father's side from Telamon,
 Who, being foremost of the army, won 1300
 And took my mother to his bed, by birth
 A princess, daughter of Laomedon,
 Whom as a guerdon set apart for him
 Alcmena's offspring gave him? And shall I,
 Born of two noble parents, and in this
 Myself most noble, shame my own kith and kin,
 Whom when laid low by such a load of cares
 Thou dost thrust out unburied, and not blush
 To avow the deed? Be well assured of it,
 If you do cast him out, us three, besides,
 You will cast out lying dead along with him!
 It would become me better to be slain 1310
 Fighting for him before the eyes of men,
 Than for your wife—or rather, brother's wife;
 Wherefore look to it; not my case, but your own;
 Since, if you injure me in anything,
 The time will come, you will be glad to choose
 To play the recreant, before braving me.

Enter ULYSSES.

I MARINER

My lord Ulysses, I would have you know
 You have come in season, if you come to help
 In setting straight, not in embroiling us.

ULYSSES

What is it, sirs? I heard a long way off
 The Atridæ, loud, over our mighty dead.

AGAMEMNON

And have not we, from this man, had to hear 1320
 Words, lord Ulysses, the most scandalous?

ULYSSES

How so? for I can hardly blame a man
Who, being reviled, joins railing issue.

AGAMEMNON

Scandals

He heard; for he was acting such to me.

ULYSSES

What did he to you that could injure you?

AGAMEMNON

He swears he will not suffer that this corpse
Should lack a tomb, but in my teeth will bury it.

ULYSSES

Then—may a friend speak truth, and yet keep stroke
As well as ever in the boat with you?

AGAMEMNON

Speak; I were foolish else; for I account
Of all the Argives you my greatest friend.

1330

ULYSSES

Then, hear me. Do not, in the name of Heaven,
Harden your heart, thus cruelly to expose
Ajax unburied; nor let violence
Drive you, by any means, to hate so deeply
As to tread justice under. Why, to me
This man was once of the whole host worst foe
After I won Achilles' arms; and yet,
Being such to me, I would not so far wrong him,
As not to say that I beheld in him
The foremost of the Argives—of us all,
Saving Achilles, who came here to Troy.
Not justly, then, would you dishonour him;
For against him your trespass would not be,
But against Heaven's decrees. The man of merit,

1340

Once he be dead, it is ill done to harm,
However you may hate him.

AGAMEMNON

Is it you
Thus fight for him, Ulysses, against me?

ULYSSES

Yes; but remember that I hated him, ✕
While I could hate with honour.

AGAMEMNON

Is it wrong, then,
You should go on, and trample on him dead?

ULYSSES

Do not exult, Atrides, in advantage, ✕
That brings dishonour.

AGAMEMNON

It is difficult
For monarchs to avoid all sacrilege.

1350

ULYSSES

But easy to defer to friends' good counsel.

AGAMEMNON

Your "man of merit" should obey, by right,
Those in command.

ULYSSES

Peace! you command then truly
When you surrender to your friends.

AGAMEMNON

Remember
To what a man you shew this favour.

ULYSSES

Yes, ✕
He was a foeman, but magnanimous.

AGAMEMNON

What are you doing, reverencing thus
The body of an enemy?

ULYSSES

With me
The valour far outweighs the enmity. ✱

AGAMEMNON

Men of your sort the world calls feather-headed!

ULYSSES

Well, many are first friends, then bitter to us.

AGAMEMNON

And do you like to have such friends as that? 1360

ULYSSES

A flinty heart I do not use to like.

AGAMEMNON

You will have us to appear afraid this day.

ULYSSES

Rather, just men ; as all the Greeks will say.

AGAMEMNON

And do you bid me let them bury the dead?

ULYSSES

Yes, for I too must lie on that same bed. ✱

AGAMEMNON

All are alike ; all toil for their own profit.

ULYSSES

And for whom should I toil, before myself?

AGAMEMNON

It shall be known, then, as your doing, not mine.

ULYSSES

So that you will but do it, anyhow,
You will do worthily.

AGAMEMNON

O, be sure of it,
To you I would concede even more than this;
But this man, dead or living equally,
Shall have my utmost hatred. As for you—
Do what you please.

1370

Exit.

I MARINER

Ulysses! He who says
That you are not born wise, being what we see you,
He is a fool!

ULYSSES

And for the future now
To Teucer here do I declare myself
As much a friend, as I was once a foe.
And I would join in burying this your dead,
And aid you in your charge, failing in nought
That men should render to their worthiest.

1380

TEUCER

Worthiest Ulysses, I can praise you, wholly,
In what I say. You disappointed, much,
My expectations; for, of all the Greeks
You, being Ajax' greatest enemy,
Alone, in act, stood by him; and in this presence
Had not the heart to do foul ignominy,
The living to the dead; as he has done—
This general, this infatuate fool, who comes—
He and his brother—and would cast Ajax out
Injuriously, robbed of his burial.

Wherefore may the elder Father of high Heaven,
 Erinyes, with unfading memory, 1390
 And end-accomplishing Justice, wither them,
 Evil, with evil, even as they sought
 To cast out Ajax with unmerited shame!
 —And now I hesitate to suffer you,
 O son of old Laertes, to set hand
 To this interment, lest unto the dead
 I do a thing displeasing; otherwise
 Help us and welcome—yes, and when you wish
 To carry any soldier to the grave,
 We will raise no objection. For the rest
 I will provide; and be assured, we deem you
 A “man of merit.”

ULYSSES

Well, it was my wish.
 But if you do not choose that I should do it, 1400
 I bow to your decision, and will go.

Exit.

TEUCER

Enough; for time and to spare
 Already has been spun out.
 Now hurry, you to prepare
 A deep-dug hollow, and you
 To set up, ready to hand,
 A tripod, girded about
 With fire, on high in the field,
 For the laving rites that are due.
 Then fetch from the tent, one band,
 The harness, all but the shield. 1410
 But do thou, boy, lovingly
 Lay hold along with me
 Of thy dead father's side,
 And lift him, with all thy pains;
 For still the dark black tide
 Wells up from the warm veins.
 Come, all you that assume
 To attend as friends; come, pay
 Service here to the one
 At all points worthy; than whom—

Than Ajax—while living, I say,
In the whole world better was none!

Chorus

Full many a thing mortals may know, who see ;
But ere they see them, none
Is able to look on
Into the future, what his lot shall be.

1420

Exeunt omnes.

NOTES.

52. I do not follow Dindorf's punctuation, but omit the comma after βαλοῦσα.

77. This, the usually accepted rendering, does not altogether satisfy me. But it seems better than to suppose, with Dale, that the sense is interrupted.

183. This is the first of several passages in which I have derived help from the prose renderings in Professor Jebb's notes to his edition of 1869. The others are ll. 208, 220, 267, 269, 405, 876, 1011, 1282, besides some single words.

293. Properly "to women silence adds a charm." But a proverb is wanted, and the English saying appears sufficiently close to the Greek, to justify its being substituted. A similar liberty has been taken in l. 714.

394. In the opening of these lines I have borrowed somewhat from Dean Plumptre. Also in ll. 433, 1045.

431. The play on the name of Ajax is untranslatable, and I do not think it worth preserving by an equivalent.

490. I take the word "determined" from Professor Campbell's translation. Also "arch" in l. 662.

554. I think this line should be omitted, and the conjunction ἔως made to follow directly on βλος, which supplies an antecedent of duration. It looks like an illustrative quotation, which has slipped into the text.

571. I should prefer to omit this line, with Dindorf: but do not see how its interpolation is to be accounted for.

581. Compare Shakespeare, *Coriol.* Act III, Sc. 1, 295,
"He's a disease that must be cut away."

Shakespeare seems to have borrowed the metaphor from a passage in Plutarch's life of Coriolanus; where however the application is different.

596. I have in this fine chorus taken the liberty of adapting a version by Praed, which I printed in the collected edition of his

Poetical Works, vol. II. p. 349, from a MS. book in my mother's possession. In many places Praed does not give the true meaning of the original; and I am afraid that in improving his translation I have somewhat injured the composition.

601. I read, with Lobeck, *ἐπαυλα*, not *ἄποινα*. This correction, with *μίμνων* and *εὐνώμαι* (see Professor Jebb's edition of 1869) appears to bring out the most probable meaning.

610. There is a metaphor here from the wrestler who "draws a by," and has to be fought with when the first antagonist is thrown. Such an allusion can hardly be pointedly translated in a lyric piece, without destroying the proportion of the sentiment.

646. This speech has been admirably turned by Calverley, in Tennysonian verse.

734. *τοῖς κυρίοις*. I take this as dative of *τὰ κύρια*, "the authorities."

775. Here, I take it, there is a metaphor from the "Tinchel," or circle of hunters who surround game.

812. I do not follow Dindorf in omitting this line.

839, 840. I follow Hermann in retaining these two lines. The next two Dindorf is no doubt right in rejecting. There is something abrupt in the termination of l. 840, which may have suggested an unnecessary interpolation.

869. *συμμαθεῖν* being in the aorist must mean "to know as well," not "to learn." See note on *O. T.* 575.

936. A word has dropped out. A translator may be allowed to supply the gap, so as to suit his stanza, without asking whether *Ἀχιλλείων* will fit into the original verse.

962. Compare Shakespeare, *A. W. E. W.* Act v, Sc. 3, 60,

"—our rash faults

Make trivial price of serious things we have,

Not knowing them, until we know their grave."

966. This speech—than which there is nothing more affecting in the seven plays—is terribly spoilt, if the quibble is used by Tecmessa, that "the death of Ajax is *more* bitter for me, than sweet for his enemies"; I have no doubt that we should read, with Eustathius, *ἦ* for *ἦ*, "in that." Can *ἦ* be used for *μᾶλλον ἦ*, without any word to precede it indicating choice or comparison?

978. Read *ἡμπόληκας* with Dindorf's small edition, not as in *Poetæ Sc. Gr.*

1036. This passage was oddly misunderstood by Lord Beaconsfield; see his address to the University of Glasgow. Teucer is by no means either resigned or self-possessed. The word *μηχανᾶν* is strongly emphatic. Lord Beaconsfield probably read *κεῖνος τὰ κείνου* in l. 1039.

1068—70. The order of the lines has been changed, in order to preserve the antithesis.

1085. The rhyme is found in the original, and is clearly intentional.

1352. The pointed repetition of *ἔσθλός*, from l. 1345, here and in 1399, has I think been neglected by all previous translators. There is an extraordinary rhetorical vigour in these concluding scenes, as though Sophocles had anticipated the common criticisms on his plot—that it lingers, or rather stands still altogether, after Ajax is dead, and had determined that the play should, if not as whole, yet in each of its parts, offer defiance to the critics.

1397. I find myself obliged to differ from many high authorities, who translate *κομίζειν* "to bring," *i.e.* to bring to the funeral of Ajax. Having just absolutely rejected the presence of Ulysses himself, how can Teucer be willing that he should bring others? Rather he promises him the exact return of his own courtesy; "whatever dead comrade you want to bury, I shall not make a grievance of it, any more than you have done on this occasion."

1417. This line, rejected by Dindorf, can by no means be spared.

Besides Professor Jebb's small edition, I have lately become acquainted with his English translation of it, printed in 1882, for the Cambridge representation of the Drama. This translation, although printed throughout as prose, is in many parts apparently but slightly altered from a rendering in verse; and I notice several coincidences of expression between these parts and my own version. Some of these may be due to my having had the author's edition before me, when I was translating the play. I have added slightly to my previous obligations to Professor Jebb, in correcting ll. 328, 528.

ELECTRA

ELECTRA

PERSONS REPRESENTED.

ORESTES, *son of Agamemnon, the late king of Argos and Mycenæ, and of Clytæmnestra.*

PYLADES, *friend to Orestes.*

An old Attendant, Guardian to Orestes.

ELECTRA, }
CHRYSOthemis, } *daughters of Agamemnon and Clytæm-*
 } *nestra.*

CLYTÆMNESTRA, *queen of Argos and Mycenæ.*

ÆGISTHUS, *cousin to Agamemnon, and in his lifetime the paramour of Clytæmnestra.*

The Chorus is composed of Ladies of Mycenæ, friends to Electra.

Attendants on Clytæmnestra.

ELECTRA

Scene, before the Palace at Mycenæ.

Enter ORESTES, PYLADES and Guardian

GUARDIAN

Son of our Captain in the wars of Troy,
Great Agamemnon, it is given thee now
With thine own eyes, Orestes, to behold
Those scenes thou hast ever longed for. Here it lies,
Argos, the ancient land of thy desire ;
The sacred glade of her the gadfly drave,
Inachus' daughter ; that's the Agora
They call Lycean, from the wolf-slaying God ;
This, on the left, Hera's renowned fane ;
And from the point we are reaching you can swear
You see Mycenæ's Golden City, and this,
The fateful house of Pelops' family ; 10
Whence I received you at your sister's hands,
And saved you from the slaughter of your sire,
And carried you away, and fostered you
So far in manhood, ready to revenge
A father's blood. Wherefore, Orestes, now—
And Pylades, thou dearest of allies—
Take we brief counsel what is right to do ;
For see, already the bright gleam of day
Calls up the birds to sing their matins clear
Above us, and the sable star-lit night
Has passed away. Now, before any man 20
Comes forth abroad, join you in conference ;

For where we stand, it is no season more
To hesitate; the hour is come to do.

ORESTES

My faithfullest of followers, what clear signs
You manifest of your good will to us!
For as a generous steed, though he be old,
Beset with difficulties, pricks his ears
And bates not of his courage, you impart
Spirit to us, and lag no whit behind.
As you desire, I will unfold my scheme;
Do you the while mark my words heedfully, 30
And if I miss the target, mend my aim.
Late, when I sought the Pythian oracle,
To learn how I might execute revenge
Upon my father's murderers, Phoebus gave me
Answer in this sort; I will tell it you;
I by myself unarmed with shields and martial bands
By craft held condign slaughter hidden in my hands.
Well, with this answer sounding in our ears,
Go you, as opportunity may lead,
Into the house, and gather all that passes, 40
And bring us word of all; for in old age,
And so long after, they will never know
Now, nor suspect you, frosted thus by time.
Tell your tale thus; you are a citizen
Of Phocis, and you come from Phanoteus,
Who is their best ally; tell them (and swear it)
Orestes has been killed by accident
By a fall from his chariot, at the Pythian games;
Let it stand so. We, as He bade, the while, 50
First with libations and shorn curls of hair
Will deck my father's grave; then back again
Return, carrying an urn of beaten brass,
(The same, you know, that in the brake lies hidden,)
That in feigned words we may convey to them
Glad tidings—how my body is destroyed,
Burnt up already and made embers of!

For where's the harm to be called dead, when really
 I am alive, and gather praise thereby? 60
 No word that profits us can hurt, I fancy.
 Why, I have seen men often, who were wise,
 Falsely pretending death; then, when they came
 Back to their homes, they have been more prized than ever;
 So I expect yet, out of this report,
 To blaze forth, star-like, living, on my foes.
 But O my native land! Gods of the soil!
 Welcome me with good fortune in these ways;
 And thou, paternal Home! for I thy cleanser
 Stand here of right, the ambassador of Heaven; 70
 Send me not with dishonour from this land,
 But grant me to inherit and set up
 The old estate.—I have spoken. Now, old friend,
 Be it your care to guard your post; go forward;
 And let us forth. It is the season; this,
 In every action, is men's best ally.

ELECTRA (*within*)

Ah woe is me!

GUARDIAN

Hark!

I thought I heard some handmaiden cry faintly
 Inside the doors, my son!

ORESTES

Is it perhaps 80
 The wronged Electra? Shall we stay awhile
 And listen to her sorrowing?

GUARDIAN

By no means.
 Do nothing ere performing what is bidden
 Of Loxias, and initiate all from thence,
 Pouring lustrations on your father's grave.
 This wafts us victory, and nerves our action.

[*Exeunt.*]

Enter ELECTRA.

ELECTRA

Holy Light, with Earth, and Sky,
 Whom thou fillest equally,
 Ah how many a note of woe,
 Many a self-inflicted blow
 On my scarred breast might'st thou mark, 90
 Ever as recedes the dark;
 Known, too, all my nightlong cheer
 To bitter bed and chamber drear,
 How I mourn my father lost,
 Whom on no barbarian coast
 Did red Ares greet amain,
 But as woodmen cleave an oak
 My mother's axe dealt murderous stroke,
 Backed by the partner of her bed,
 Fell Ægisthus, on his head;
 Whence no pity, save from me, 100
 O my father, flows for thee,
 So falsely, foully slain.
 Yet I will not cease from sighing,
 Cease to pour my bitter crying,
 While I see this light of day,
 Or the stars' resplendent play,
 Uttering forth a sound of wail,
 Like the child-slayer, the nightingale,
 Here before my father's door
 Crying to all men evermore.
 O Furies dark, of birth divine!
 O Hades wide, and Proserpine! 110
 Thou nether Hermes! Ara great!
 Ye who regard the untimely dead,
 The dupes of an adulterous bed,
 Come ye, help me, and require
 The foul murder of our sire;
 And send my brother back again;
 Else I may no more sustain
 Grief's overmastering weight. 120

Enter Chorus of Ladies of Mycenæ.

Chorus

O child, Electra, child
 Of one too fatally bold,
 How sighest thou, unsatisfied yet,
 Evermore wasting away,

For him, Agamemnon, beguiled
By thy crafty mother of old,
Spite of all Gods, in her net,
To base hands given for a prey?
Accurst be the author of this!
If I pray not amiss.

ELECTRA

O women of noble strain,
Ye are come to solace my pain; 130
I know it, I well perceive;
It escapes me not at all;
Howbeit I will not leave
To lament my father's fall.
Ye my love who repay
With all love ever gave,
Ah let me be, I pray,
Leave me to rave.

Chorus

But not from Hades below,
Not from the all-welcoming shore,
Even with strong crying and prayer
Canst thou raise thy father again.
Past all measure in woe 140
Thou art perishing evermore,
Sinking deep in despair,
Where no release is from pain;
Ah why so bent upon grief,
Too sore for relief?

ELECTRA

None but fools could forget
Their fathers' wrongs, who are gone.
But on her my fancy is set,
The bird, Heaven's messenger,
Wildly bemoaning her
For Itys, Itys alone!
O forlorn Niobe, 150
As one godlike I deem of thee,
Alas! that abidest, weeping,
In a rock-tomb's keeping!

Chorus

Not first of mortals with thee,
Daughter, did sorrow begin;

Whereas thou passest the rest,
 Thy kith and kindred within,
 The life Chrysothemis lives,
 And Iphianassa, and he
 In the flower of his youth who grieves,
 Hid, but not all unblest,
 Whom the land, Mycenæ fair,
 Will receive, her princes' heir,
 When he, Orestes, shall come
 By Heaven's guidance home.

160

ELECTRA

Whom I wait for, and go
 Ceaselessly wet with tears,
 Unespoused, childless, forlorn,
 Bearing still, as I must,
 The unending burden of woe;
 But he forgets with the years
 All he has heard and borne;
 For what message comes I can trust?
 Ever he longs to be here—
 He will not appear!

170

Chorus

Nay cheer thee, cheer thee, my child;
 God in the Heavens is yet great,
 Who surveys all else and commands.
 Leave thou then in his hands
 Anger—the excess of regret,
 Nor chide overmuch—nor forget
 Those whom thou needs must hate.
 For Time is a God right mild;
 Nor can Agamemnon's son
 By Crisa's pastoral shore,
 Nor the monarch of Acheron,
 Be deaf evermore.

180

ELECTRA

But already most of my day,
 Hopeless, has faded away;
 I can do no longer withal;
 Without parents to cherish me I waste,
 Without husband's love, to defend;
 Yea alien-like, disgraced,

I inhabit my father's hall,
And in this guise attend
At a board with no feast laid,
Uncomely arrayed.

190

Chorus

At his return arose
A burden of woes—of woes
To thy father's resting-place,
What time was darted a thrust,
From fangs all brass, at his face.
Fraud was deviser—Lust
Was slayer—embodying the shade
Of a fell deed foully planned,
Yea, whether by heavenly aid
Or a mortal's hand.

200

ELECTRA

O day that far beyond all
Dawned most hateful to see!
O night—O sorrows abhorred
Of that ghastly festival—
Murder done villainously
On my sire, by the hands of twain
Who took my life as a prey,
Who annihilated me!
Whom may God with rightful reward,
The Olympian Power, again
For their deeds amply repay,
Nor let them compass their bliss
By an act like this!

210

Chorus

Take heed; say no more.
Hast thou no consciousness
Out of what wealth before
Thou fall'st thus miserably
Into ills that abide with thee?
Thou hast wrought thee woes in excess,
Bringing forth strife on strife
To the heaviness of thy life;
And is it so easy a thing
To contend with a king?

220

ELECTRA

Hard is my fate, full hard;
 I know it; I am mad, I confess;
 Yet not for the fates that oppress
 Will I keep this wrath under guard,
 So long as my life shall endure!
 For from whom, companions dear,
 Should I submissively hear
 Reason, or from whom, that is wise,
 Counsel, fit for mine ear?
 Let me be; cease to advise;
 All this must pass without cure;
 I shall never be free from distress,
 And laments numberless.

230

Chorus

Yet I bid thee, faithful still,
 As a mother, and in good will,
 Do not add new ill unto ill.

ELECTRA

And where should a limit be set
 For evil to spread?
 Or how is it well, to forget
 The cause of the dead?
 In what man's heart
 Could a plant like this find place?
 Be mine no part
 In such men's favour or grace!
 Nor, if with any good things
 My fortune is blent,
 Be it mine to rest in content,
 And fetter the wings
 Of piercing cries, or tire,
 Praising my sire.
 For if in the earth, as nought,
 The dead must lie,
 And these, in return, who ought,
 The slayers, not die,
 Then farewell honour, and fall
 Men's reverence, all!

240

I LADY

I came, my daughter, zealous for your good 250
As for my own; but if I say not well,
Have it your way; for we will follow you.

ELECTRA

I am ashamed, dear ladies, if I seem
Through frequent lamentations overmuch
Oppressed with ills; but, for necessity
Obliges me to do so, pardon me.
For how should any woman gently born,
Viewing the sorrows of her father's house,
Do otherwise than I, who witness them
For ever day by day and night by night
Rather increase than lessen? to whom, first, 260
The mother's face who bare me has become
Most hostile; next, I must be companied
In my own home with my sire's murderers,
By them be ruled, take at their hands, or else
At their hands hunger! Then, what sort of days
Do you suppose I lead, when I behold
Ægisthus seated on my father's throne,
Wearing the selfsame garments which he wore,
And pouring out libations on the hearth 270
By which he slew him? When I witness, too,
The consummation of their impudence,
The homicide lying in my father's bed
With that abandoned mother—if it be right
To call her mother, who consorts with him!
And she—so profligate that she lives on
With her blood-guilty mate—fearing no vengeance—
Rather, as if exulting in her doings—
Looks out the day on which by cunning erst
She slew my father, and each month on it
Sets dances going, and sacrifices sheep 280
In offering to her guardian deities!
I see it, I, ill-fated one! At home

I weep and waste and sorrow as I survey
 The unblest feast that bears my father's name,
 In secret; for I cannot even weep
 So freely as my heart would have me do;
 For this tongue-valiant woman with vile words
 Upbraids me, crying "Thou God-forsaken thing,
 Has no man's father died, save only thine?
 Is nobody in mourning, except thee? 290
 Ill death betide thee, and the nether Gods
 Give thee no end to these thy sorrowings!"
 So she reviles; save when she hears it said
 Orestes is approaching; straightway then
 She is possest, and comes and screams at me—
 "Is it not you who are the cause of this?
 Pray is not this your doing, who stole Orestes
 Out of my hands, and conjured him away?
 But mind you, you shall pay me well for it!"
 So snarling, there joins with her and stands by
 And hounds her forward her illustrious groom, 300
 The all unmanly, all injurious pest,
 Who fights no battles without women! I,
 Waiting and waiting, till Orestes come
 And end it, miserably daily die.
 For always meaning, never doing, he
 Has utterly confounded all my hopes
 Remote or present. Friends, in such a case,
 There is no room—no, not for soberness
 Or piety; but, beneath injuries,
 There is deep need we prove injurious, too!

I LADY

Stay, tell me, is it with Ægisthus near 310
 You talk thus to us, or is he gone from home?

ELECTRA

That is he. Never think, if he were by,
 I could roam forth; but he is abroad just now.

I LADY

Then I might come with better confidence
To speech of you, that being so.

ELECTRA

Oh, ask freely ;
He is not here. What do you want to know?

I LADY

And so I will. What of your brother say you?
I would fain know, will he come soon, or tarry?

ELECTRA

He says he will. He does not keep his word.

I LADY

A man is backward, when on some great exploit. 320

ELECTRA

I was not backward, when I rescued him !

I LADY

Take courage, he is of a worthy stock ;
He will not fail his friends.

ELECTRA

I trust so. Else
I never should have been alive so long.

I LADY

Hush, say no more just now ; for I perceive
Chrysothemis your sister, who was born
Of the same mother and same sire as you,
Come from the palace, carrying in her hands
Oblations customary to the dead.

Enter CHRYSOTHEMIS.

CHRYSOTHEMIS

Sister, what talk is this, which you repeat
Out at the entrance of the vestibule,

And will not learn, taught by long years, to cease 330
Vainly indulging unavailing rage?

I for myself can say as much as this—

I chafe at what I witness, in such fashion,
That if I could get power, I would make plain
The sort of temper that I bear towards them;
But in these dangers it seems good to sail
Close-reefed, and not pretend to be at work,
But effect nothing harmful; and I wish
You too would do the like; and yet, the right
Is not as I declare, but as you judge;
Only, if I am to live at liberty,
I must in all things heed my governors. 340

ELECTRA

Well, it is strange that you, being his child
Who was your sire, should have regard for her,
Your mother, and have quite forgotten him!
All this good counsel you bestow on me
Is of her teaching; and of your own self
You can say nothing. Therefore take your choice;
Either you are of evil mind, or else
Are minded to forget those dear to you;
Who said but now, if you could get the power,
You would shew plain the hate you have for them;
And yet, while I am doing everything
To avenge our father, do not take your part,
And seek to turn me from it, who take mine! 350
Danger! Is there not cowardice as well?
Come, answer me, what should it profit me
To cease my mourning? Or else hear me speak;
Do I not live? unprosperously I know,
But well enough for me; to them, the while,
I am a torment, and so render honour
To him that's gone, if there be service there!
You—madam hatress—you pretend you hate,
But really take your father's murderers' side!
For my part, I will never bend to them;
Not though a man should come and offer me 360

These gauds of yours, in which you glory now !
Yours be the full-spread board, the cup o'erflowing ;
For me—be it my only sustenance
Not to offend against my conscience. Thus,
I do not ask to share your dignities,
And were you well-advised, no more would you !
But now, though it be in your power to be called
Your father's child—the foremost of mankind,
Be called—your mother's ! So you shall appear
In most men's eyes unmeritoriously,
False to your friends, and to your father's shade.

I LADY

Now in Heaven's name, no chiding ! There is good
In what you both have said, if you would learn 370
Something from her, and she again from you.

CHRYSOTHEMIS

Oh, I am quite accustomed to her talk ;
Nor, ladies, had I ever said one word,
Had I not heard a very great mishap
Was coming on her, which will make her cease
From her long sorrowing.

ELECTRA

Come, your bug-bear, tell it !
If you can mention any greater grief
Than these I have, I will reply no more.

CHRYSOTHEMIS

Well, I will tell you everything I know.
They are going, if you will not cease this mourning,
To send you where you shall not ever see 380
The sunlight, but sing sorrow underground,
Buried alive, out of this territory.
Wherefore take heed, or by and by, in trouble,
Never blame me. Prudence is easy, now.

ELECTRA

Ay? have they purposed to do so to me?

CHRYSOTHEMIS

Most surely, when Ægisthus shall come home.

ELECTRA

Why as for that, let him come speedily!

CHRYSOTHEMIS

What was it that you prayed for, silly one?

ELECTRA

For him to come; if he is that way minded.

CHRYSOTHEMIS

So you may get—what treatment? Are you mad? 390

ELECTRA

So I may get—farthest away from you!

CHRYSOTHEMIS

And of life present have you no regard?

ELECTRA

Living like mine is choice, to marvel at!

CHRYSOTHEMIS

It might be, had you sense to be discreet.

ELECTRA

Do not instruct me to be treacherous.

CHRYSOTHEMIS

I do not; but to yield to those who govern.

ELECTRA

Well, gloze it so; you do not speak my language.

CHRYSOTHEMIS

Yet it were well not to be ruined through folly.

ELECTRA

Come ruin, if needful, in a father's quarrel!

CHRYSOthemis

I am sure our father pardons us for this. 400

ELECTRA

That is the speech a villain might approve.

CHRYSOthemis

You will not hearken and agree with me?

ELECTRA

I trust I am not yet so senseless. No!

CHRYSOthemis

Then I will go on whither I was sent.

ELECTRA

Where are you going? To whom bear you these offerings?

CHRYSOthemis

My mother sends me, to strew my father's grave.

ELECTRA

How say you? To the most detested foe—

CHRYSOthemis

Yes—"whom she murdered!" That is what you mean?

ELECTRA

By whom, of all friends, bidden? At whose desire?

CHRYSOthemis

Through some nocturnal panic, to my thinking. 410

ELECTRA

Gods of my fathers, only aid me now!

CHRYSOthemis

Do you gain any courage from her scare?

ELECTRA

Tell me about the dream, and I could say.

CHRYSOTHEMIS

Only I do not know it; except just
In brief, the story.

ELECTRA

Well, but tell me that;
Brief words ere now have often led astray—
And righted mortals.

CHRYSOTHEMIS

It is said she saw
An apparition of your sire and mine
Come back again to daylight; and he took
The sceptre which he sometime bore himself, 420
But now Ægisthus bears, and planted it
Upon the hearth, and out of it a shoot
Budded and grew, till all Mycenæ's land
Was covered with its shadow. So I heard
Related by a fellow who was by,
While to the Sun-god she disclosed her dream.
But more than this I know not; only that
She sends me on account of this alarm.
Now I beseech you, by our country's Gods,
Listen to me, and be not ruined by folly;
For though you should repulse me, by and by
In trouble you will turn to me again. 430

ELECTRA

Nay but let nothing of your burden, dear,
Light on the tomb! for it were shame—were sin
From an abominable spouse to bring
Lustrations near, or perform obsequies
To a sire's shade. Let the winds have them, rather!
Or hide them deep in dust, where none of them
Shall ever touch our father's resting-place;
Let them be kept, stored underground, for her

When she is dead! Why surely, were she not
 The most abandoned of all womankind, 440
 She never would be decorating o'er,
 With her unfriendly strewments, him she murdered!
 Why look you, think you the entombed dead
 Will take these gifts in kindness, at her hands
 Who slew him foully, like an enemy,
 Lopped of the extremities, the stains of blood
 Smeared off, for lustral washings, on his head!
 Do you imagine what you bear can purge
 Her from her murder? Never! Let it be!
 Cut from your head the longest locks of hair—
 And mine, unhappy—little worth, indeed, 450
 But what I have—and give it him, this hair
 Untended, and my girdle, unadorned
 With broiderings! Fall upon your knees, and pray him
 In favour come and help us, from the earth,
 Against our enemies; and that his boy
 Orestes may set foot, before he die,
 Superior, on the bodies of his foes,
 That we may crown him afterward with hands
 Larger in gift than we can proffer now!
 Yea I believe, I do believe, that he
 Had part in sending her this ugly dream; 460
 But still, sister, do this, for your own sake,
 And mine, and his, the man of all mankind
 Dearest, our sire, who in the grave lies dead.

I LADY

The princess speaks religiously, my friend;
 And you, if you are wise, will heed her.

CHRYSOTHEMIS

Yes.

It stands to reason, not that two should quarrel
 Over their duty, but be quick and do it.
 Only while I essay this business, friends,
 Do you keep secret, in the name of Heaven!

For if my mother hears it, to my cost 470
Methinks, I shall attempt this venture, yet.

Exit CHRYSOTHEMIS.

Chorus

I.

If I be seer
Not wholly erring and unpolicied,
Self-propheying Justice means to appear,
Bringing large succour to the righteous side,
And following on, my child, with no long waiting-tide.
Courage springs up within me, as I hear
The voice of dreams, breathing sweet music near; 480
He who begat thee, the Hellenian King,
Forgets not ever; nor that Ancient Thing,
The two-edged brazen fang, by which he foully died.

2.

Lo, this is she,
Erinys, hiding her dread ambushed bands, 490
Sandalled with brass, with myriad feet and hands.
Yea time hath been, when they who should not, plied
A blood-stained spousal-work, unmeet for bed or bride.
Whence it comes o'er me, I shall never see
On doer and accomplice harmlessly
This portent fall; and nothing future can
By good or ill dream be revealed to man, 500
If this night-vision speed not, landward, on the tide.

O chariot-race weary
Of Pelops of old,
How fateful, how dreary,
Thou hast proved to this land!
For since Myrtilus slumbered,
From the chariot, all gold, 510
Torn, silenced for ever,
Flung far from the strand,
From thenceforth never
The weary disgrace
Of troubles unnumbered
Hath passed from the race.

Enter CLYTÆMNESTRA, attended.

CLYTÆMNESTRA

You gad abroad, then, masterless again,
Ægisthus absent; who did hinder you
From bringing scandal on your family
By brawling at the doors! Now he is gone,
You pay no heed to me; though many a time, 520
In many people's ears, you have proclaimed—
I, without shame or warrant, violate
Your rights and honours! I meanwhile commit
No violence; I but repay with scorn
The scorn you heap on me. Your father, though—
This and no other—is your pretext still,
How by my hand he died! By mine; I know it;
There's no denial of the deed in me.
But Justice slew him; I was not alone;
And had you sense, you ought to take her side;
Since he, this father whom you still bewail, 530
Alone of all the Argives had the heart
To offer to the Gods your sister's life—
Whose pains in her begetting equalled not
My travail pangs, who bare her! Be it so;
Now tell me for what cause, and for whose sake,
He offered her? For the Argives, will you say?
They had no right to kill a child of mine!
If for his brother Menelaus' sake
He slew my daughter, was not he to pay
Forfeit for that? Were there not children twain
Born to that father, who, had right been done,
Ought rather to have died, whose sire and dam 540
Themselves had caused that voyage? Had the Grave
Some fancy for my offspring, for its feast,
Rather than hers? Or had all natural love
Expired in that pernicious father's heart
For children born of me, but not for children
Of Menelaus? Was it not the act
Of a perverse insensate sire? I think it,
Though you deny; and so would that dead girl

Say, could she speak. For what my hands have done
I do not feel remorse; but if to you 550
I seem to think amiss—censure your folk,
When you yourself are just!

ELECTRA

You cannot say
Now, that I crossed you and you answered me!
Yet if you gave me leave, I would speak fairly
For him that's dead, and for my sister too.

CLYTÆMNESTRA

I give it you! If you addressed me thus
Always, it would not chafe me so to hear.

ELECTRA

Then listen! You avow my father's death;
What could more ill become your mouth than this,
Whether he were unjustly slain or no? 560
But let me tell you that you slew him not
For Justice, but perverted by the lure
Of a base wretch, who is your consort now.
What! Question of the Huntress Artemis
On whose account she held the various winds
Spell-bound in Aulis! Rather, I will tell;
For 'tis not given you to learn of her.
My father once, as I have heard the tale,
While sporting in a sacred wood of hers,
Roused as he went a dappled antlered roe,
And with some careless vaunt of slaughtering it
Shoots at and hits it; wherefore Leto's maid, 570
Wrathful at this, kept back the Achaian host,
Till he should render up for sacrifice,
In payment for the beast, his daughter dear—
And therefore was she offered; since escape
There was none other for the armament,
Either toward Ilion, or backward home.
Whence much enforced, and much resisting it,

Not for the sake of Menelaus, he
Unwillingly gave her to the knife at last.
But what an if (for I will take your story)
He did it through benevolence for him?
Was it thereafter just that he should perish,
And at your hand? Under what law? Beware
You do not, while you set this law to others, 580
Lay up repentance for yourself, and pain.
If we begin to exchange life for life,
You should die next, if you received your due.
But look you do not proffer for excuse
That which is not; for tell me, if you will,
Why you are now doing things most execrable,
Consorting with the branded murderer
By whose connivance erst you slew my sire,
And bearing children, to the extrusion of
Your honest first-born, born in honesty? 590
How should I pardon this? Or will you claim
In this, too, to be taking vengeance for
Your daughter? It sounds vilely, if you do;
For 'twere unseemly in a daughter's quarrel
To couple with an enemy! Ay truly,
It's an offence even to admonish you,
Who let your tongue run freely, when you say
That I speak evil of my mother! I
A slave-mistress account you, over us,
As much as mother; for a life of bondage
Is it I lead, compassed with many griefs,
Wrought by yourself and by your paramour. 600
And poor Orestes is an exile, too,
Hardly delivered from your violence,
And living on in wretchedness—the same
You have so oft charged me with nurturing
To take revenge on you; and so I would—
Never doubt that—if I had strength to do it.
Now, for that treason, publish me to all
Shameless—perverse—abusive—what you will;
And if I be an adept in the same,
I do bare justice to your blood in me!

I LADY

I see her breathing fury! Right or wrong, 610
Now, 'tis all one, for any thought she gives it!

CLYTÆMNESTRA

What sort of thought, then, must I give to her,
Who in this fashion dares insult her mother,
And at her years? Do you suppose she means
To exceed all measure in her shamelessness?

ELECTRA

Now understand, I do feel shame at this,
Although to you I may not seem to feel it.
I do perceive it, that my conduct is
Unseasonable, and unbefitting me.
Only your acts and your hostility
Force me to this behaviour. Infamy 620
Is got by contact with the infamous.

CLYTÆMNESTRA

Insolent creature! I, my words and acts,
Make you so loudly over-eloquent?

ELECTRA

It is your fault, not mine; you are the doer,
And deeds find names.

CLYTÆMNESTRA

Now not by Artemis,
Who is my mistress, when Ægisthus comes
Shall you escape, for this audacity!

ELECTRA

See, now you fly into a frenzy! First
You let me speak my mind—then, you'll not listen!

CLYTÆMNESTRA

Will you not let me sacrifice, without 630
Words of ill omen, after suffering you
To say all that you can?

ELECTRA

Go, sacrifice!

I let you! Nay, I bid you! Don't accuse
My mouth again, for I shall say no more.

CLYTÆMNESTRA

Take up the offerings, you that wait on me,
The fruits of earth, that unto this my Lord
I may prefer petitions for release
Out of my present terrors.—Hear thou now,
Protector Phœbus, my unuttered vow!
For what I say I say not among friends,
Nor is it meet to uncover all my ends
Here, in her presence, to the open sky, 640
Lest she with malice and loud clamorous cry
Scatter vain babblings to the city round;
But softly list, and soft my words shall sound.
The ambiguous visions, whose dim shadowing
Last night I witnessed, O Lycean King,
If they portended good, give them like close;
If evil, turn them backward on my foes.
And do not thou, if any would by stealth,
Let them disturb me from my present wealth;
Let me live on securely, as to-day, 650
Holding the Atridæ's palace, and their sway,
Abiding with the friends I bide withal
Now, in good case; and with my children, all
Through whom no bitter pang is made to strike
Their mother's heart, or shudder of dislike.
Hear, great Apollo, what I pray for thus,
And, as we ask, in grace give all of us.
—The rest, I think, thou, being divine, perceivest,
Though I be silent; for it cannot be
But all is open to the sons of Jove.

Enter Guardian.

GUARDIAN

Ladies, to whom I am a foreigner,

660

Pray how might I discover if this palace
Be that of King Ægisthus?

I LADY

Sir, it is ;

You have guessed rightly.

GUARDIAN

And am I further right
In guessing that this lady is his wife?
She bears a queenly presence.

I LADY

Certainly :

You see her there before you.

GUARDIAN

Madam, hail !
I bring you pleasant tidings from a friend ;
You, and Ægisthus also.

CLYTÆMNESTRA

They are welcome.
But I would hear first, who he was that sent you.

GUARDIAN

Phanoteus of Phocis, with a weighty charge. 670

CLYTÆMNESTRA

Of what sort, stranger, say? for I am sure,
Being from a friend, that you will speak us friendly.

GUARDIAN

Briefly I speak. Orestes is no more.

ELECTRA

O I am lost, unhappy !

CLYTÆMNESTRA

What sir, what?

Never mind her !

GUARDIAN

I say as I have said.
Orestes is dead.

ELECTRA

O me, I am undone!
Now I am nothing!

CLYTÆMNESTRA

Yea, see thou to that.
How came he by his death, sir? Tell me truly.

GUARDIAN

I will tell all; for to that end I came. 680
The man had gone to the great festival—
The glory of Hellas—for the Delphian games;
And when he heard the shouting of the crier
Calling the foot-race, which is first adjudged,
He entered for it, comely to behold,
The worship of the eyes of all men there;
And having reached the limit of the course
Whence they were started, he came out of it
With the all-honoured prize of victory.
To say but little out of much I might,
I never saw before the acts and prowess
Of such a man as he; but take one statement; 690
In every heat for which the judges set
The customary courses, out and home,
He brought off all the honours of the day,
And was congratulated, and proclaimed
“An Argive, named Orestes”—and “the son
Of Agamemnon”, him who mustered once
The illustrious host of Hellas. So far well.
But if some Deity is in the way,
It is not even a strong man can escape.
For he, another day at sunrise, when
Owners of horses met to try their speed,
With many other charioteers, went in. 700
One was Achaian, one from Sparta, two

Libyans, skilled masters of the yoke and car ;
He among these, with mares of Thessaly,
Came fifth ; the sixth was from Ætolia,
With bright bay colts ; the seventh Magnesian ;
The eighth of Ænian birth, his horses white ;
The ninth from Athens the divinely builded ;
Last, a Bœotian's car made up the ten.
These, stationed where the judges of the course
Cast each his lot, and ranked his driving-board, 710
Forth started at the brazen bugle's note,
And cheering to their horses all at once
Shook the grasped reins ; then the whole course was filled
With rattle of the chariot metal-work ;
The dust rose high ; crowded together, all
Spared not the goad—so might some one of them
Fore-reach on snorting steed and axle-tree ;
While evermore alike on back and wheel,
Foaming and quick, the coursers' pantings came.
But he kept close under the endmost mark, 720
Sweeping his axle round continuously,
And, giving rein to the right-handmost steed,
Pulled back the inner goer. And at first
The driving-boards all held themselves upright ;
But afterwards the Ænian's hard-mouthed colts
Bolt violently ; and coming from the turn,
After the sixth, just in the seventh round,
Dash all their fronts against the Barca car ;
Then, in an instant, from one accident,
Car upon car began to crash and fall,
And the whole plain of Crisa became filled
With wreck of steeds and tackling. At the sight 730
That crafty driver, he from Athens, draws
Out of the way, and slackens, passing by
The surge of chariots eddying in the midst.
Last came Orestes, trusting to the close,
Keeping his fillies back ; but seeing him
Left in alone, he launches a shrill whoop
'Through his fleet coursers' ears, and races him,

And yoke and yoke the couple drove along,
Now one and now the other shewing head
Out in the front, over their carriages. 740
Well, all his rounds, poor fellow, till the last,
He stood up straight, and kept his chariot straight,
And drove straight through; then, slackening the left rein
As his horse turns, he struck unwittingly
The corner of the mark, and snapped the nave
Short from the axle, and slipped instantly
Over the rail, and got entangled in
The cloven reins; as on the plain he fell,
His steeds into the middle of the course
Ran all astray. Then the whole host, that saw him
Precipitated from the driving-board,
Lifted their voices to bewail the youth 750
Who did such feats, and met with such hard fate,
Now dashed upon the ground, now seen with limbs
All upward flung to heaven; till chariot-men
Hardly restrained the steeds in their career,
And loosed him, bathed in blood, so that no friend,
Seeing the poor body, could have known 'twas he.
Then certain Phocians, ordered for the task,
Straightway consumed it on a funeral pile,
And hither in a little urn they bring
That mighty stature, in poor embers now,
To win a tomb in his own fathers' land. 760
Such is my tale; right piteous in the telling;
But in the sight of us, who witnessed it,
The saddest thing of all I ever saw.

I LADY

Alack, the lineage of our lords of old
Is all, too plainly, ruined from the root.

CLYTÆMNESTRA

O God, this fortune—shall I call it fair,
Or black, though profitable? yet is it hard
That I should save my own life, through misfortunes
Which are my own!

GUARDIAN

Why thus regretful, lady,
At what I have just told you?

CLYTÆMNESTRA

It is strange—
This motherhood; for sons of one's own bearing, 770
However ill entreated at their hands,
One cannot muster hatred.

GUARDIAN

I am come,
It seems, in vain.

CLYTÆMNESTRA

Nay indeed, not in vain.
Why should you say in vain? if you are come
With a sure token that the man is dead,
Who was indeed the offspring of my being,
But from this bosom and maternal care
Revolted, and became as one estranged,
An exile; never, from the day he left
This country, saw me more; but, laying to me
His father's death, was ever threatening me,
So that sweet sleep neither by night nor day
Would shadow me, but the impending hour 780
Held me continually in fear of death;
While now, since I am this day freed from danger
Of him, and of her too—for she dwelt with me
A far worse canker, ever draining deep
My very life-blood—now, for all her menaces,
I shall dwell tranquil!

ELECTRA

O me miserable!
Why now, Orestes, there is room enough
To groan for thy misfortunes, when, being thus,
Thou art scorned by this thy mother! Is it well? 790

CLYTÆMNESTRA

Not thou—but he being as he is, is well.

ELECTRA

Hear, Nemesis of him who is no more !

CLYTÆMNESTRA

Nemesis has heard and executed well
That which was fitting.

ELECTRA

Triumph ! you are happy now.

CLYTÆMNESTRA

You and Orestes cannot hinder me.

ELECTRA

'Tis we are hindered ; far from hindering you.

CLYTÆMNESTRA

I were beholden to your coming, friend,
If you had hindered her from her loud clamour.

GUARDIAN

Well then, I will be going—if all is well.

CLYTÆMNESTRA

Nay surely ; for it would be sin in me
That you should do so, and unworthy of
The friend who sent you. Please you enter in ?
Leave her alone, to sorrow out of doors
For her dear friends' misfortunes, and her own.

800

Exeunt CLYTÆMNESTRA and Guardian.

ELECTRA

Seems it to you as if, in grief and pain,
She was lamenting, weeping sore—the wretch !
Over her son, thus lost ? She is gone smiling !
O me unhappy ! Orestes, O my darling,

How has thy death undone me! Parting thus,
 Thou tearest all the hopes out of my heart—
 All I had left—that thou would'st come, some day, 810
 Living, avenger of thy father's death,
 And of my wrongs. Now, whither should I turn?
 I am alone; I have no father; now
 I have not thee. Must I be slave once more
 Among the most detested of mankind,
 My father's murderers? Is it well with me?
 Nay, for the future never more at all
 Shall one roof hold us; rather, on this door-stone,
 friendless
 I will sink down and wear away and die!
 For this if any of the tribe within 820
 Is angered, let him kill me; death were welcome;
 Life is but pain, and I am sick of it.

I. 1.

I LADY

*Where be Jove's thunders, where the flaming Day,
 If, seeing these things, they hide them, and are still?*

ELECTRA

Ah, welaway!

I LADY

My child, why weepest thou?

ELECTRA

Fie then—

I LADY

Speak gently.

830

ELECTRA

Thou wilt slay me.

I LADY

How?

ELECTRA

*Yea, in my wasting, thou wilt trample more
Upon me, if thou wilt suggest a hope
For those who manifestly are dead and gone.*

I. 2.

I LADY

*I know that women's gold-bound toils ensnared
The king Amphiaraus; and now beneath—*

ELECTRA

Ah well a day!

840

I LADY

He reigns, with all his powers.

ELECTRA

Ah, woe!

I LADY

Woe, for the murderess—

ELECTRA

Slain?

I LADY

Ay, slain.

ELECTRA

*I know it, I know it; a champion was revealed
For him, in trouble; none is left, for me;
He who yet was is taken from me, and gone.*

II. 1.

I LADY

Thou art meet for pity; piteous is thy lot.

ELECTRA

That know I well, too well; my life is full 850
*With month on month, with surge on surge of woes,
Hateful and fearful.*

I LADY

All thy groans we know.

ELECTRA

Therefore no more dissuade me, since not one—

I LADY

How say'st thou?

ELECTRA

*Is left of all my hopes of aid,
From him, the heir, born of one birth with me.*

II. 2.

I LADY

All have their fate.

860

ELECTRA

*Meet all such fate as his,
Dragged in a cleft of the reins, poor hapless one,
Among fleet emulous hoofs?*

I LADY

Strange, the mishap!

ELECTRA

*How otherwise, when without care of mine,
A stranger—*

I LADY

Out, alas!

ELECTRA

*He passed away,
Meeting no burial, no lament, from me.*

870

Enter CHRYSOTHEMIS.

CHRYSOTHEMIS

*My dearest, I am driven, for delight,
To throw decorum to the winds, and run!
For I bring pleasure, and an end of all
The ills that you felt once and sorrowed for.*

ELECTRA

Whence would you fetch assistance for my woes,
Whereof all healing is impossible?

CHRYSOTHEMIS

Orestes is at hand! I tell you so!
He's here, in sight, plainly as you see me!

ELECTRA

Fie, are you frantic, wretch, and do you jest
At your own sorrows, and at mine? 880

CHRYSOTHEMIS

Not I,
By the house-altar! I do not say this
For wantonness; but he is come, indeed!

ELECTRA

O wretched that I am! and from whose mouth
Did you receive this tale, that you believe
So overfondly?

CHRYSOTHEMIS

It is proved to me
By my own eyes, none other; for I see
Clear evidence.

ELECTRA

See proof? O wretch, what proof?
What did you see, to inflame you all at once
With this mad fever?

CHRYSOTHEMIS

Listen, in Heaven's name,
That you may learn; and call me, afterwards,
Either distraught, or sober. 890

ELECTRA

Say your say,
If it affords you any pleasure.

CHRYSOTHEMIS

I

Am telling you exactly what I saw.
As I approached our sire's ancestral grave,
I observed streams upon the pillar's top
Of milk fresh-running, and the sepulchre
Circled with garlands of all flowers in bloom.
I was surprised to see it, and looked round,
Lest somebody should be approaching me.
But when I found all quiet about the place,
I crept up to the tombstone, and perceived,
Upon the very corner of the pile, 900
A severed ringlet of a young man's hair.
No sooner did I see it, than there darts
Into my poor heart a familiar dream—
This that I was beholding was the token
Of my most dear Orestes! No light word
I uttered; but I took it in my hands,
And my eyes filled with tears at once, for joy.
And well I know, and well I knew it then,
How from no other came that ornament.
For whose work should it be, save yours or mine?
And I at least, I am certain, did it not, 910
Nor yet did you; how could you? when you know
You cannot even with impunity
Go out of doors to worship at a shrine;
Nor can it be our mother who would care
To do it, or have done it unperceived.
No, 'twas Orestes made those offerings.
But O dear heart, take courage! The same Power
Succours not always the same side alike;
And on us twain it has frowned hitherto;
But none the less, this morning shall be fraught
With many things for good.

ELECTRA

Alack the while!

How I pity you for your folly! 920

CHRYSOthemis

But what is it?

Do I not speak to please you now?

ELECTRA

You know not

Whither you are borne—how far you are astray!

CHRYSOthemis

But how can I not know, what I saw plainly?

ELECTRA

O wretched girl, he's dead! his saving us
Is done and ended; never look to him!

CHRYSOthemis

Alas for pity! Who was it told you so?

ELECTRA

One that was present with him, when he perished.

CHRYSOthemis

'Tis very strange. Where is he?

ELECTRA

In the palace;

Welcome, not odious, in our mother's eyes.

CHRYSOthemis

Alas for pity! But from whom, then, came
All those oblations to our father's grave?

930

ELECTRA

I think most likely some one put them there
In memory of Orestes, who was dead.

CHRYSOthemis

O miserable! and I was hastening hither,
Joyful to have such tidings, unaware
What mischief was upon us! Now, arrived,
I find the old sorrows still, with others new.

ELECTRA

'Tis so indeed ; but if you list to me,
You can relieve the burden of the woe
That presses now.

CHRYSOthemis

What, can I raise the dead? 940

ELECTRA

I did not say so ; I am no such fool.

CHRYSOthemis

What do you bid me, that is in my power?

ELECTRA

Dare to do that which I shall urge on you !

CHRYSOthemis

If it will aid us, I shall not refuse.

ELECTRA

Look, without effort nothing thrives.

CHRYSOthemis

I know it.
All I have strength for I will help to bear.

ELECTRA

Hear, then, the course I am resolved upon.
Friends to stand by us even you must know
That none are left us ; but the Grave has taken
And reft them ; and we two remain alone. 950
I, while I heard my brother was alive
And well, had hopes that he would come, one day,
To the requiting of his father's death ;
But since he is no more, to you I look
Not to refuse, with me, your sister here,
To slay the author of that father's murder,
Ægisthus ; (we need have no secrets, now.)
For whither—to what still surviving hope

Do you yet look, and suffer patiently?
Who for the loss of your ancestral wealth 960
Have cause for grieving, and have cause for pain
At all the time that passes over you,
Growing so old, a maiden and unwed.
And these delights never expect to gain
At any time ; Ægisthus is too prudent
To suffer that your progeny or mine
Should see the light, to his own clear undoing !
While, if you will be guided by my counsels,
First, you shall have the praise of piety
From your dead sire and brother in the grave,
Next, shall be called hereafter, as at first, 970
Free, and obtain a marriage worthy of you ;
For all men pay regard to honesty.
And as for glory—see you not what glory
You will confer upon yourself and me,
If you should heed me? For what citizen
Or stranger, who beholds us, will not greet
Our passing steps with praises such as these :
“ Friends, look at those two sisters, who redeemed
Their fathers’ house ; who, prodigal of life,
Were ministers of slaughter to their foes 980
Who prospered well before ; to them be worship,
To them the love of all men ; at high feasts,
In general concourse, for their fortitude,
That pair let all men honour.” Of us two
Such are the things that every man will say,
So that our glory shall not cease from us,
Living or dead. O, be persuaded, dear !
Succour your father’s, aid your brother’s cause,
Liberate me from evils, and yourself,
Remembering this, that a dishonoured life
Is shame to those who have been born in honour.

I LADY

In work like this forethought is serviceable 990
Both to the speaker and the listener.

CHRYSOTHEMIS

And if she were not mentally perverse,
 She would have had some thought of prudence, ladies,
 Before she ever spake—which now she has not.
 Why, in what prospect do you arm yourself
 With such a valour, and call me to aid?
 Can you not see, you are not man, but woman?
 Your hand is weaker than your enemies'.
 Heaven sends good fortune daily upon them,
 Which runs from us, and comes to nothingness. 1000
 Who, then, that schemed the death of one so mighty,
 Could scape uninjured by calamity?
 Look that we do not happen on worse ills
 Through our ill conduct, if these words get wind.
 Death, with disgrace, though we obtain some credit,
 Is no advantage and no help to us;
 For death is not the worst; rather, in vain
 To wish for death, and not to compass it.
 But I beseech you, ere we are destroyed
 With a complete destruction utterly,
 Ere you abolish our whole family, 1010
 Set bounds on passion! What you said just now
 I will keep close, unspoken, unpursued;
 Only be wise enough to yield at length
 To stronger power, having yourself no strength.

I LADY

Let her persuade you; there is no good thing
 Better than forethought and sobriety.

ELECTRA

You have said nothing I did not look for. Well
 I knew, you would reject my instances.
 Yes, I must do it by myself alone;
 At least, without one blow, we will not leave it. 1020

CHRYSOTHEMIS

Ah, would you had been so minded, when our sire
 Was murdered! Then you would have ended all!

ELECTRA

I was, in temper ; I lacked wisdom then.

CHRYSOthemis

Try and remain as wise for evermore !

ELECTRA

Now that you preach, I know you will not help me !

CHRYSOthemis

And any man would come to harm who did !

ELECTRA

I envy you your prudence ; for your cowardice,
I hate you !

CHRYSOthemis

I will bear it, when you praise.

ELECTRA

Only you never will get praise of me !

CHRYSOthemis

It will be long, yet, before that is settled.

1030

ELECTRA

There is no service in you ; get you gone.

CHRYSOthemis

There is ! With you there is no towardness.

ELECTRA

Go to your mother ; tell it all to her.

CHRYSOthemis

I do not hate you quite so much as that.

ELECTRA

Do not forget, though, to what shame you drag me.

CHRYSOthemis

Shame not at all ; but forethought for your good.

ELECTRA

So I must follow what you think is just?

CHRYSOthemis

When you are prudent, you shall guide us both.

ELECTRA

Pity that you should speak so well, and miss it!

CHRYSOthemis

You have named right the fault on your own side. 1040

ELECTRA

How can that be? Do you deny the justice
Of what I urge?

CHRYSOthemis

Justice sometimes brings damage.

ELECTRA

Under those laws I do not choose to live.

CHRYSOthemis

Well, you will find me right, if you will do it.

ELECTRA

Ay and I will! You cannot frighten me.

CHRYSOthemis

Is't really so? Will you not change your mind?

ELECTRA

Nothing's more odious than an evil mind.

CHRYSOthemis

You seem to care for nothing I can say.

ELECTRA

I have resolved to do it of old time,
Not newly.

CHRYSOTHEMIS

I am going. Neither you 1050
Deign to approve my words, nor I your ways.

ELECTRA

Go in, then! I shall never follow you;
Not though you come to wish it earnestly;
There were small sense in running after—folly!

CHRYSOTHEMIS

And if you think that reason is with you,
So reason still! for, when your footsteps light
In evil ways, then you will find me right.

Exit CHRYSOTHEMIS.

Chorus

I. 1.

We that regard
The excellent wisdom of the birds of air,
Who for the nurture care 1060
Of those they spring from—those who gave them food,
Why is it hard
For us, like them, to render good for good?
But, by the thunderbolt of sovereign Jove,
And Themis, throned above,
We scape not long!
Thou, who to mortals in the realms of death
Passest through earth, send forth thy voice, O Fame,
With piteous cry, to Atreus' sons beneath,
Bearing thy tale of shame
Unmeet for song,

I. 2.

How first of all 1070
Corruption dwells within their palace hall,
And, with their children, strife;
The dissonant watchword harmonized no more
Now, as before,
By sweet endearments of their household life.
Electra, left alone, by rude waves tossed,
Mourns for her father lost
With ceaseless wail,

Even as the ever-sorrowing nightingale,
 Careless for death, so she might end them too,
 The accursed pair—yea, ready for the gloom ; 1080
 What woman lives as true
 This side the tomb?

II. 1.

For none among the great
 Would court oblivion,
 Darkening his honour by a life of pain,
 As thou, my child, hast done,
 Choosing to share a fate
 Full of all tears, not caring to obtain
 At once, in the same breath, the twofold prize
 Of daughter perfect, and of maiden wise. 1090

II. 2.

Live thou—in wealth and force
 Above thy foes as far
 As now thou dwellest underneath their might !
 For under no good star
 Have I beheld the course
 Lying, of thy life ; yet in the paths of Right
 Most sovereign—thou, I say, in these hast trod
 The foremost, through thy piety to God.

Enter ORESTES and PYLADES, with an urn.

ORESTES

Were we told right, and are we tending right,
 As we desire, fair ladies?

I LADY

And what seek you? 1100
 What are you here for?

ORESTES

I was asking where
 Ægisthus lived.

I LADY

Then you are well arrived,
 And your informant blameless.

ORESTES

Which of you
Would kindly carry word to those within
Of the long-looked-for presence of us twain?

I LADY

If the most near ought to announce it, she will.

ORESTES

Lady, go in and tell them certain Phocians
Seek for Ægisthus.

ELECTRA

O me miserable!
Are you not bringing tokens to confirm
The tale we heard?

ORESTES

I do not know your story; 1110
But my old master, Strophius, gave me charge
To tell about Orestes.

ELECTRA

O sir, what?
How terror creeps upon me!

ORESTES

We bring home
Poor relics of him, in a narrow urn,
Dead, as you see.

ELECTRA

Unhappy that I am!
Here is the thing already evident.
I see your burden, I suppose, at hand.

ORESTES

If you are grieving for Orestes' ills,
Know, that this vessel holds the dust of him.

ELECTRA

O sir, in Heaven's name give it—if this urn
Hides him indeed—into my hands, to hold, 1120
That I may weep and mourn to the uttermost
For my own self, and my whole race, at once,
Over these ashes!

ORESTES

Bring it here, and give her,
Whoever she may be; for I am sure
She does not ask it out of enmity,
But as some friend, or blood-relation born.

ELECTRA

Ah thou memorial of my best-beloved,
All that is left me of Orestes, how
Do I receive thee back—not as I hoped,
When I first sped thee on thy way! For now
I bear thee in my hands, and thou art nothing;
But O my child, I sent thee forth from home 1130
Glorious with life! Would that I first had died,
Before I sent thee to a foreign land,
Stolen by these hands and out of slaughter saved;
So had that day beheld thee lying dead,
Partaking with me in thy father's grave.
But now thou hast perished—perished miserably,
An exile in a strange land, far from home,
Far from thy sister; nor with loving hands
Bathed I thy body, and laid it out—woe's me!
Nor, as was fitting, from the blazing pyre
Took up the poor remains. But cared for—ah, 1140
By unfamiliar hands thou art come hither,
A little burden, in a little urn.
Ah me unhappy for my ancient care
Made fruitless, for the pleasing toil I spent,
Often, on thee! for not at any time
Wert thou thy mother's darling, more than mine;
I was thy nurse; no houselings fostered thee;
I was thy "sister", ever, too, by name.

But now all this has vanished in a day,
 Even with thy death. For thou hast gathered all 1150
 Together, like a whirlwind, and art gone;
 My father is no more; I too am dead
 In thee; thyself art dead, and gone from me;
 And our foes laugh; and that disnatured mother,
 Of whom thou hast often sent word privily
 Thou would'st thyself appear to punish her,
 Raves with delight! This the ill Destiny
 Of thee and me wrested away; who sent thee
 On to me thus—not the dear form I loved,
 But embers, and an unavailing shade.
 —Woe's me! O piteous sight! Alas, alas, 1160
 A terrible journey hast thou gone, my dear;
 Woe's me! and without thee I am undone;
 I am undone without thee, O my brother!
 Receive me then into this house of thine,
 Nought unto nought, to dwell with thee below
 For evermore. For when thou wast on earth,
 All that I had on earth I shared with thee;
 And—for I see no grieving in the dead—
 I would die now, so I might share thy tomb. 1170

I LADY

Your sire, Electra, was a mortal man;
 So was Orestes; wherefore do not grieve
 Beyond all bounds; we all owe Heaven a death.

ORESTES

O Heavens, what shall I say? whither shall I turn
 For lack of words? for I have lost the power
 Of speech!

ELECTRA

What ails you? Wherefore do you say it?

ORESTES

Is this the illustrious Electra—you?

ELECTRA

That is it, and in case right miserable.

ORESTES

Alack therefore, for this thy wretched lot !

ELECTRA

Sir, you are not lamenting thus for me?

1180

ORESTES

O beauty foully—impiously destroyed !

ELECTRA

The wretch you speak of is no other, sir,
Than I.

ORESTES

Alas for thy estate, unwed,
Unfortunate !

ELECTRA

Why do you groan, sir, thus,
Gazing on me !

ORESTES

How did I nothing know
Of my own woes !

ELECTRA

By what, that has been said,
Did you discover that ?

ORESTES

By seeing you,
Preeminent in multitude of griefs.

ELECTRA

And yet you see but little of my woes.

ORESTES

How could there be worse things than these to see ?

ELECTRA

That I am sorted with the murderers.

1190

ORESTES

Whose murderers? Whence is this hint of crime?

ELECTRA

My father's. Next, I am perforce their slave.

ORESTES

Who is it bends you to this exigence?

ELECTRA

My mother—in name—but nothing mother-like.

ORESTES

And how? by force, or wearing injury?

ELECTRA

By force, by wearing, and all ills that be.

ORESTES

And was none by to help or hinder it?

ELECTRA

No; him I had you have brought here in ashes.

ORESTES

Ill-fated one, how has the sight of you
Moved my compassion!

ELECTRA

Know, you are the first
Who ever had compassion upon me.

1200

ORESTES

Because I am the first to come, who feel
With your misfortunes.

ELECTRA

It can never be
You are some kinsman, who have come—whence could you?

ORESTES

If these are friends about us, I will tell.

ELECTRA

Yes, they are friends ; you parley to safe ears.

ORESTES

Put down this vessel, now, and learn the whole.

ELECTRA

Ah sir, for Heaven's sake urge not this on me !

ORESTES

Do as I tell you, and you shall not err.

ELECTRA

Now, I adjure you, do not take away
My greatest treasure !

ORESTES

I will not let you hold it.

ELECTRA

O my Orestes ! Woe is me for thee,
If I must be deprived of burying thee !

1210

ORESTES

Do not speak rashly. You do wrong to mourn.

ELECTRA

How wrong, in mourning for my brother dead ?

ORESTES

It is not meet that you should call him so.

ELECTRA

Am I then so disdained of him that's dead ?

ORESTES

Disdained of none ; but you have no part here.

ELECTRA

Not when I bear Orestes' ashes ?

ORESTES

Not

Orestes' ashes ; only his in feigning.

ELECTRA

Then where is that poor body's sepulchre ?

ORESTES

No where. The living have no sepulchre !

ELECTRA

What say you, fellow ?

ORESTES

What I say is true.

1220

ELECTRA

Is he alive ?

ORESTES

Yes, unless I am dead !

ELECTRA

What, are you he ?

ORESTES

See here, my father's seal !

Look at it well, and learn if I speak truly.

ELECTRA

O happy day !

ORESTES

Most happy ; even so.

ELECTRA

O art thou come, dear voice ?

ORESTES

No more to sound

From alien lips.

ELECTRA

What, have I got you ?

ORESTES

Yes,

For you to keep, in future, evermore.

ELECTRA

O dearest friends ! O ladies, neighbours ! Look,
Here is Orestes, only dead in craft,
And by that craft alive and safe at home !

I LADY

Daughter, we see it ; and the tears of joy 1230
Steal from our eyes, at what has come to pass.

ELECTRA

O son, dear seed
Of one most dear to me !
And art thou come indeed ?
Thou hast found—yea, come and seen those thou didst seek to see !

ORESTES

Yes, I am here ; but hush, keep silence.

ELECTRA

Why ?

ORESTES

Best to keep close, lest some one hear indoors.

ELECTRA

Nay but, by the ever-virgin Artemis,
I never think to quail again at this, 1240
The cumbering plague of numbers feminine,
That ever swarm within !

ORESTES

O but remember that in women too
There lives a spirit of war ; and thou hast proved it.

ELECTRA

Ah well a day !
Thou makest the memory plain—
That will not pass away—
That cannot be forgotten—of my pain. 1250

ORESTES

Sister, I know it ; but, when occasion speaks,
Then is it we should call to mind these doings.

ELECTRA

All day, all night,
Were not too much for me
To speak of them aright ;
Now that my lips at last are set at liberty.

ORESTES

I say not nay. But then, remember—

ELECTRA

What?

ORESTES

Where the time presses, do not talk too long.

ELECTRA

Who, after thy appearing, would exchange
Language for silence? That were dearly bought,
Now I have found thee, in a manner strange
Beyond all hope or thought ! 1260

ORESTES

You saw me then, when the Gods urged my coming.

ELECTRA

O grace, far more
Than that thou first didst tell !
If to thy kinsmen's door
God sent thee safe, that count I miracle ! 1270

ORESTES

I am unwilling to restrain your joy,
But fear you are too much overcome with rapture.

ELECTRA

Oh, if after years of waiting
I have found thee condescending
By a way full fraught with blessing
Here before me to appear,
Seeing me so full of troubles,
Spare, O spare—

ORESTES

What should I spare thee?

ELECTRA

Be not thou so much my wronger
As to make me lose the pleasure
Of thy presence !

ORESTES

Nay,
I should be very wroth with other men
If I beheld them—

ELECTRA

Do you say so?

ORESTES

How

Could I forbear?

1280

ELECTRA

Tidings came, women dear,
I had never thought to hear;
I refrained, and said no word,
And without one murmur heard,
Sorrowing ! But I have thee, now !
With most sweet face there standest thou,
Face, that even in misery
Could not pass away from me.

ORESTES

Pass, what need not be said ; spare me the telling
How base our mother ; how Ægisthus drains
The family substance, giving largess here, 1290
There scattering without purpose ; for the tale
Would keep you from the occasion time has given.
But what will fit the present urgency,
Where, either visible or from ambushment,
We may arrest our scoffing enemies
In this day's work, explain ; be careful, too,
That as we enter at the palace door
Your mother do not spy your secret out
In your glad aspect ; but be sighing, still,

As at that fiction of calamity ;
For when we are successful, we shall be
Free to rejoice and laugh ungrudgingly. 1300

ELECTRA

Well, brother, as it pleases you in this,
So too shall be my pleasure ; for from you
I have derived the blessings I enjoy—
Blessings not mine ; and I could never bear,
By causing you annoy, ever so brief,
To reap great gain myself ; for ill should I
So minister to the Providence at hand.
You know, no doubt, all that is passing here ;
You heard Ægisthus was away from home,
My mother in the palace ; and for her,
Fear not she will perceive my countenance 1310
Radiant with smiles ; for my long-standing hate
Is well worn in ; and, having seen thy face,
I shall not leave off weeping now, for joy.
How should I leave it ? who in this day's work
Saw thee first dead, then living ! Yea, thou hast wrought
Very strangely with me ; so that if my sire
Were to come here in life, I should not now
Deem it a vision, but believe I saw him.
Since then by such a road thou art come hither,
Lead on, as thou art minded ; for alone
One of two things I had not failed to achieve— 1320
Bravely to right myself, or bravely perish.

I LADY

Peace, I advise you ; for of those within
I hear one coming outward.

ELECTRA

Enter, sirs ;
The rather that you bring—what none would drive
Far from their doors—or willingly receive !

Enter Guardian.

GUARDIAN

O most unwise and impotent of mind,
 Have you no longer any care to live,
 Or is no natural prudence in you, that
 You see not how you stand, not on the brink,
 But in the very midst of straits most grievous? 1330
 If I had not been watching all along
 Close to the threshold, all your business here
 Would have preceded you inside the house;
 But as it is, I took good heed of that.
 Now make an end of your long conference,
 And this insatiate crying out for joy,
 And pass within; for in such work as this
 Delay is loss, and it is time to finish.

ORESTES

How shall I find things there, if I go in?

GUARDIAN

All's well so far, that you are quite unknown. 1340

ORESTES

You have told them, I suppose, that I was dead?

GUARDIAN

You'd think you were in Hades, though alive,
 To hear them talk!

ORESTES

Do they rejoice at that?

What are they saying?

GUARDIAN

When the time is full

I will inform you; but as things are now,
 All they are doing, however ill, goes well.

ELECTRA

Brother, who is this man? For Heaven's sake, tell me!

ORESTES

Do you not know him?

ELECTRA

I cannot even guess.

ORESTES

Not him, to whom you once delivered me?

ELECTRA

What man? what do you mean?

ORESTES

Him, in whose hands

I was made off with to the Phocians' land 1350
By your providing?

ELECTRA

What, is this the man

Whom only I found faithful out of many
When our sire perished?

ORESTES

Once for all, 'tis he.

ELECTRA

O happy day! O only saviour
Of Agamemnon's house! How art thou come hither!
Art thou the man who from a crowd of woes
Preserved both him and me? O hands most dear!
O feet, most grateful for your ministry!
How could'st thou so long hide thee in my presence,
And kill me with false words, and shew me not,
Knowing all the while, the sweet reality? 1360
Welcome, my father! I seem to see a father;
Welcome! and know, thou art the man, of men,
Whom in one day I have hated most—and love!

GUARDIAN

Enough, I say; the story of all since then
Many revolving nights and days as long

Shall make to pass before Electra's eyes.—
 But now I warn you both, you who stand by,
 This is the time to act; now Clytæmnestra
 Is left alone; now no one of the men
 Is within doors; but if you will delay,
 Consider, you will have to deal with these, 1370
 And more besides, and of more wit, than they.

ORESTES

This matter need not call upon us now
 For any long discussion, Pyllades!
 Rather, first worshipping the ancestral shrines
 Of all the Gods who keep this vestibule,
 As quickly as we may, let us pass in.
Exeunt ORESTES, PYLADES and Guardian.

ELECTRA

O King Apollo, hear them graciously,
 And me as well; me, who have come to thee
 Right often, with persistent hand, that gave
 Of all I had; so now with all I have,
 Apollo, King Lycean, I implore,
 I supplicate, I pray thee—go before, 1380
 And help us in our ends; and make mankind confess
 How the Gods quit them, for their wickedness!
Retires.

Chorus

1.

Behold where Ares, breathing forth the breath
 Of strife and carnage, paces—paces on.
 The inevitable hounds of death,
 Hunters upon the track of guilt, are gone.
 They stand the roof beneath;
 And now not long the vision of my prayer
 Shall tarry, floating in the fields of air. 1390

2.

For now within these walls, with stealthy pace,
 The aider of the kingdoms of the dead

To his ancestral dwelling-place,
 Bearing keen slaughter in his hands, is led.
 Hermes, of Maia's race,
 Hiding his toils in darkness, leads the way
 Straight to the goal, and makes no more delay.

ELECTRA (*advancing*)

O dearest women, at this very time
 The men are doing the deed; but hush, be still.

I LADY

How then? How are they doing?

ELECTRA

She is dressing 1400
 The urn for burial; and the Pair stand by.

I LADY

And what have you rushed out for?

ELECTRA

To take care
 Ægisthus come not in without our knowing.

CLYTÆMNESTRA (*within*)

Woe's me! Alack, the house—
 Empty of friends, and full of murderers!

ELECTRA

A cry within! O friends, do not you hear it?

I LADY

I heard, unhappy, sounds I might not hear;
 And I am chill with horror.

CLYTÆMNESTRA (*within*)

Woe is me!
 Ægisthus, O where are you?

I LADY

Hark again,
 Some one is shrieking loud.

CLYTÆMNESTRA (*within*)

O child, my child, 1410
Have mercy on your mother!

ELECTRA

Thou hadst none
On him, or on his father who begat him.

Chorus

O city, O race ill-starred!
The curse is ever on thee, day by day,
To fade, and fade!

CLYTÆMNESTRA (*within*)

O, I am smitten!

ELECTRA

If thou beest a man,
Strike twice!

CLYTÆMNESTRA (*within*)

Again!

ELECTRA

O for Ægisthus too!

Chorus

The curse is fulfilled.
They live, who lie in the grave.
Slain long since, they drink, at last,
The blood of their slayers, in turn.

1420

I LADY

See, they come forth! Their fingers drip with gore
Poured out on Ares' altar. I am dumb.

Enter ORESTES and PYLADES.

ELECTRA

How is it with you, Orestes?

ORESTES

In the house
Well; if Apollo's oracle be well.

ELECTRA

Is the wretch dead?

ORESTES

No longer be afraid
Thy mother's pride shall trample on thee more.

I LADY

Cease, for I see Ægisthus full in view!

ELECTRA

Back, boys!

ORESTES

Where do you see the man?

1430

ELECTRA

He comes
Towards us from the precincts, gay at heart.

I LADY

Make for the entrance, quick!
Now, as ye have well achieved the former task,
Finish this too!

ORESTES

Be easy; we will do it.

ELECTRA

Go your ways.

ORESTES

I am gone.

ELECTRA

I will provide for matters here.

*Exeunt ORESTES and PYLADES.**Chorus*

'Twere well to pronounce
Brief words in this man's ear,
Mildly couched, that he may rush
On the hidden struggle of doom.

1440

Enter ÆGISTHUS.

ÆGISTHUS

Which of you knows, where are those Phocian strangers
They say have brought us tidings that Orestes
Has lost his life, by shipwreck of his team?
You there, my question is of you, yes, you
That used before to be so malapert;
For it concerns you most, I think, to know,
And more than all, it is for you to say.

ELECTRA

I know. How could I help it? Otherwise
I should be ignorant of calamity
Nearest to me—of mine.

ÆGISTHUS

And where may be 1450
The strangers? tell me, pray.

ELECTRA

They are within.
They—fell on a kind hostess!

ÆGISTHUS

Did they say
That he is dead in very earnest?

ELECTRA

Nay,
They brought and shewed it us—not merely told us.

ÆGISTHUS

Is it hard by, that I may see, and know?

ELECTRA

You may, indeed—a very sorry sight.

ÆGISTHUS

Your words have pleased me much; which is not usual.

ELECTRA

If they can give you pleasure, pray be pleased.

ÆGISTHUS

Now hold your peace, and open wide the gates,
For Myceneans, Argives—all to see,
So that, if any of them heretofore
Were buoyed by empty hopes of such an one,
Seeing him now dead, they may accept my curb,
And, having me for master, may not need
To be compelled to bring forth fruits of wisdom!

ELECTRA

It is all done, on my part; for at last
I have the wit to choose the stronger side.

*The scene opens, disclosing the body of CLYTÆMNESTRA, veiled;
ORESTES and PYLADES standing by.*

ÆGISTHUS

O Zeus, I fix my gaze upon a corpse
That has not fallen, but by the wrath of Heaven.
Nay, if it move thee, Nemesis, I unsay it!
Loosen all coverings from before my face,
That of me too my kindred may obtain
The meed of mourning.

ELECTRA

Take them off yourself.
To see this corpse, and speak with amity,
Is not my work, but yours.

ÆGISTHUS

Well, you say true,
And I will do your bidding; in mean while,
If she is in the house, call Clytæmnestra.

He raises the veil.

ORESTES

Seek her no further; she is at your side.

ÆGISTHUS

O what is this?

ORESTES

Who is it, whom you fear?

Who is it, whom you do not recognize?

ÆGISTHUS

Who are the men into whose very toils

I have fallen, unhappy?

ORESTES

Did you never dream

You parleyed with the living as the dead?

ÆGISTHUS

O me, I understand you! It must be

No other than Orestes speaks to me.

1480

ORESTES

Excellent seer! and yet so long deceived!

ÆGISTHUS

I am lost, miserably! But suffer me

To speak a little—

ELECTRA

Brother, in Heaven's name

Let him no further talk, and make long speeches.

Once overtaken by calamity,

What profit should a man who is to die

Draw from delay? Nay, kill him on the spot,

And cast him forth, slain, to such buriers

As it is fitting he should meet withal,

Out of our eye-sight! This alone can be

An expiation for my wrongs of old.

1490

ORESTES

Go thou within, with speed. The contest now

Lies not in words, but for thy life-blood.

ÆGISTHUS

Nay,

Why do you drag me to the house? What need
Of darkness, if the deed is honourable?
Why are you backward to despatch me here?

ORESTES

Prescribe not thou! Pass, where thou slew'st my father,
And perish there.

ÆGISTHUS

Is it fated that this roof
Must witness all the ills of Pelops' race,
That are, or shall be?

ORESTES

Thine, at any rate.

I am soothsayer good enough to tell thee that!

ÆGISTHUS

The craft you boast was not inherited, then! 1500

ORESTES

Thou prat'st, and prat'st; and the way lengthens out;
Move on.

ÆGISTHUS

Lead forward.

ORESTES

Thou must foot it first.

ÆGISTHUS

Lest I escape thee?

ORESTES

Rather, that thy soul
May not pass easily; this bitterness
I must reserve for thee. And well it were
If this quick justice could be dealt on all—

Whoever will transgress the bounds of right,
To strike him dead. *Kills Ægisthus.*
So should not villany thrive.

Chorus

O Atreus' seed !
How hardly, after many labours past,
Thou art come forth to liberty at last,
Through this new trial perfected indeed ! 1510
Exeunt omnes.

NOTES

21. I follow Professor Jebb's reading, ἔσταμεν.

87. This is usually rendered "air coextensive with earth." Literally it is "air that shares equally with earth." The question is, in what is it that air and earth are said to share? Surely in *light*, the first object addressed, and the only subject of the verb, ἦσθον. Earth and air are attested as the domains of light; this is good poetry and good sense; but the statement that earth and air are coextensive is a mere cosmical proposition, of no poetical importance whatever.

107. τεκνολέτεια is "child-destroying," with a mythological allusion to the story of Itys and Philomela.

114. I do not follow Dindorf in omitting this and the preceding line, but read αἱ τοὺς εὐνάς, κ.τ.λ.

244. I do not adopt Dindorf's alteration, γᾶ, nor his punctuation of l. 316.

550. This line has been differently rendered in four ways, according as the "just opinion" is taken to be that of Clytæmnestra, or of Electra, and according as Electra is held to be exhorted to blame her own party, or her relations, *i.e.* her foes. I follow the interpretation which is supported by the greatest number of authorities. Dindorf's punctuation favours a different view.

691. I follow Porson's correction, ἄθλ' ἄπερ.

734. See the capital story told by Sir F. Doyle, in his *Reminiscences*, p. 93. His view is now generally adopted by scholars.

746. My interpretation of τμητοῖς ἰμάσι differs from those usually followed. The significant repetition of the adjective with ὀλοοῖς, l. 861, makes it difficult for me to regard it as a mere otiose epithet, "shapely," or "dainty," or "cut out" as opposed to "twisted." Moreover Sophocles does not appear to use such epithets, as Homer does. If we consult the representations of war or racing chariots given on vases, we find (British Museum, B. 82, 273, &c; Gerhard, *Auserlesene Griechische*

Vasenbilder, IV. CCLII. CCLIII; *Monumenti Inediti*, IV. LIV.) that the right and left hand reins were not continuous in early times, but consisted of eight separate straps, of equal length, the right and left hand four respectively being usually braced or knotted together just over the horses' hind-quarters, and divided by a rope or rail, which passed from the front of the chariot to a tall peg fixed either in the yoke or pole. If a charioteer, slipping over the front of the chariot, were caught in one of the forks or clefts of the reins occasioned by these knots, he would hardly be able to extricate himself. It is not the case, as Professor Campbell supposes, that the driver, in Greece, at this period, passed the reins round his body; and I do not think this is implied by Eur. *Hip.* 1221.

It is physically impossible that such a fall could have been backwards, as Professor Paley thinks, or that a driver falling backwards could be entangled in the reins.

The "giving rein" to the right hand trace horse, and "pulling in" of the left hand one, would on this hypothesis be effected by a simple movement of both hands to the right. It is to be observed that the slipping of individual reins back or forward in the grasp would, with four separate straps, unknotted, in each hand, be both difficult and unsafe.

822. Compare Shakespeare's *Rich. II.* Act v. Sc. 5, 103:

"Patience is stale, and I am weary of it."

861. Schiller, who was intimately acquainted with this play, has made excellent use of this circumstance of horror, in the agony of Thekla—

"Ward ihm sanft

Gebettet, unter den Hufen seiner Rosse?"

Wall. Tod, Act IV. Sc. 5.

He is less happy, when he recurs to the *Electra* for assistance in the parting between Max and Wallenstein, and transfers to the old warrior Electra's ἐγὼ τρόφος, &c., l. 1147.—

"Ich selbst war deine Wärterin, nicht schämt' ich

Der kleinen Dienste mich, ich pflegte deiner

Mit weiblich sorgender Geschäftigkeit.

882. I do not adopt Dindorf's reading νῶ, nor his πότμον in l. 1075.

1086. I follow Professor Jebb in the interpretation of this difficult passage. If Electra is praised in the strophe for aiming at the "double prize," it would make an anticlimax, that she should be congratulated in the antistrophe on obtaining the single, though higher reward.

1160. Lord Beaconsfield was unfortunate in his references to Sophocles. There is a ludicrous misquotation (through defect) from this passage in his life of Lord George Bentinck, p. 585.

1162. See Shakespeare, *Pericles*, Act III. Sc. 1. 56. Interesting as it is to trace resemblances of expression in the works of the greatest poets, it is not to be suggested that Shakespeare consciously or unconsciously borrowed from Sophocles, except possibly on one occasion only, *O. T.* 1415.

1354. If "dearest light" meant "dearest sight," and referred to the old servant's face, then in l. 1224 it must similarly refer to Orestes. But this is precluded by Orestes' answer.

1414. I adopt Hermann's reading. Mr Whitelaw's makes the doom fade, not the house. Otherwise, he argues, the deed of Orestes would be spoken of as a new "crime." But why a crime? It is a new stage, anyhow, in the extinction of the house of Pelops, and as such, a new manifestation of the doom.

1507. I consider Ægisthus to be struck dead with the first word of this line, as he comes within the shadow of the fateful roof. It is quite unnecessary to suppose him walked off the stage, in order that he may be killed inside, in the bath-room, after the play is ended. See l. 1497.

My obligations in this play are chiefly to the renderings given in the notes to Professor Jebb's edition of 1867; see ll. 277, 323, 568, 731, 781, 1433. Also to Professor Campbell in l. 135, and to Dean Plumptre in l. 347.

OEDIPUS TYRANNUS

OEDIPUS TYRANNUS

PERSONS REPRESENTED

ŒDIPUS, *King of Thebes.*

PRIEST *of Zeus.*

CREON, *brother to Jocasta the Queen.*

TIRESIAS, *a Prophet, with the title of King.*

A Messenger from Corinth.

An old Shepherd.

A Second Messenger, servant of Œdipus' household.

JOCASTA *the Queen, wife to Œdipus, formerly married to Laius, the last king.*

ANTIGONE, } *daughters to Œdipus and Jocasta.*
ISMENE, }

The CHORUS is composed of Senators of Thebes.

Inhabitants of Thebes, Attendants.

A Boy leading Tiresias.

OEDIPUS TYRANNUS

*Scene, before the Royal Palace at Thebes. Enter ŒDIPUS;
to him the Priest of Zeus, and Inhabitants of Thebes.*

ŒDIPUS

Children, you modern brood of Cadmus old,
What mean you, sitting in your sessions here,
High-coronalled with votive olive-boughs,
While the whole city teems with incense-smoke,
And pæan-hymns, and sounds of woe the while?
Deeming unmeet, my children, this to learn
From others, by the mouth of messengers,
I have come here in person, Œdipus,
Known far and wide by name. Do you, old man,
Since 'tis your privilege to speak for these, 10
Say in what case you stand; if of alarm,
Or satisfaction with my readiness
To afford all aid; hard-hearted should I be,
Did I not pity such petitioners.

PRIEST

Great Œdipus, my country's governor,
Thou seest our generations, who besiege
Thy altars here; some not yet strong enough
To flutter far; some priests, with weight of years
Heavy, myself of Zeus; and these, the flower
Of our young manhood; all the other folk
Sit, with like branches, in the market-place, 20
By the Ismenian hearth oracular

And the twin shrines of Pallas. Lo, the city
Labours—thysself art witness—over-deep
Already, powerless to uprear her head
Out of the abysses of a surge of blood;
Stricken in the budding harvest of her soil,
Stricken in her pastured herds, and barren travail
Of women; and the God with spear of fire,
Most abhorred Pestilence, falls on the town
And vexes it; so that the Cadmean home
Is all dispeopled, and the obscure Grave
With sighings and with groans made opulent. 30
Not that we count thee as the peer of Heaven,
I, nor these children, seat us at thy hearth;
But as of men found foremost in affairs,
Chances of life and shifts of Providence;
Whose coming to our Cadmean town released
The toll we paid, of a hard Sorceress,
And that, without instruction or advice
Of our imparting; but of Heaven it came
Thou art named, and known, our life's establisher.
Thee therefore, Œdipus, the mightiest head 40
Among us all, all we thy supplicants
Implore to find some way to succour us,
Whether thou knowest it through some voice from heaven,
Or, haply, as of some man; for I perceive
In men experienced that their counsels best
Find correspondence in things actual.
Haste thee, most absolute sir, be the state's builder!
Haste thee, look to it; doth not our country now
Call thee deliverer, for thy zeal of yore?
Never let us remember of thy rule
That we stood once erectly, and then fell; 50
But build this city in stability!
With a fair augury didst thou shape for us
Our fortune then; like be thy prowess now!
If thou wilt rule this land (which thou art lord of),
It were a fairer lordship filled with folk
Than empty; towers and ships are nothingness,
Void of our fellow men to inhabit them.

ŒDIPUS

Ah my poor children, what you come to seek
Is known already—not unknown to me.
You are all sick, I know it; and in your sickness 60
There is not one of you so sick as I.
For in your case his own particular pain
Comes to each singly; but my heart at once
Groans for the city, and for myself, and you.
Not therefore as one taking rest in sleep
Do you uprouse me; rather deem of me
As one that wept often, and often came
By many ways through labyrinths of care;
And the one remedy that I could find
By careful seeking—I have taken it.
Creon my wife's brother and Menœceus' son 70
I sent to Pytho, to Apollo's house,
To ask him by what act or word of mine
I might redeem this city; and the hours
Already measured even with today
Make me solicitous how he has sped;
For he is longer absent than the time
Sufficient, which is strange. When he shall come,
I were a wretch did I not then do all
As the God shews.

PRIEST

In happy time thou speak'st;
As these, who tell me Creon is at hand.

ŒDIPUS

Ah King Apollo, might he but bring grace, 80
Radiant in fortune, as he is in face!

PRIEST

I think he comes with cheer; he would not, else,
Have been advancing thus, with crown on brow
All berries of the bay.

ŒDIPUS

We shall know soon;
He is within hearing.

Enter CREON, attended.

My good lord and cousin,
Son of Menœceus,
What answer of the God have you brought home?

CREON

Favourable; I mean, even what sounds ominous,
If it have issue in the natural way,
May all end well.

ŒDIPUS

How runs the oracle?
I am not confident, nor prone to fear 90
At what you say, so far.

CREON

If you desire
To hear while these stand near us, I am ready
To speak at once—or to go in with you.

ŒDIPUS

Speak before all! My heavy load of care
More for their sake than for my own I bear.

CREON

What the God told me, that will I declare.
Phœbus our Lord gives us express command
To drive pollution, bred within this land,
Out of the country, and not cherish it
Beyond the power of healing.

ŒDIPUS

By what purge?
What is the nature of the tragedy?

CREON

Exile, or recompense of death for death; 100
Since 'tis this blood makes winter to the city.

ŒDIPUS

Whose fate is this he signifies?

CREON

My liege,
We had a leader once over this land,
Called Laius—ere you held the helm of state.

ŒDIPUS

So I did hear; I never saw the man.

CREON

The man is dead; and now, we are clearly bidden
To bring to account certain his murderers.

ŒDIPUS

And where on earth are they? Where shall be found
This dim-seen track-mark of an ancient crime?

CREON

“Within this land,” it ran. That which is sought, 110
That may be caught. What is unheeded scapes us.

ŒDIPUS

Was it in house, or field, or anywhere
In foreign parts, that Laius thus got slain?

CREON

He went professedly on pilgrimage;
But since he started, came back home no more.

ŒDIPUS

Nor any messenger nor way-fellow
Looked on, from whom one might have learnt his story
And used it?

CREON

No, they perished, all but one;
He fled, affrighted; and of what he saw
Had but one thing to say for certain.

ŒDIPUS

Well

And what was that? one thing might be the means 120

Of our discovering many, could we gain
Some narrow ground for hope.

CREON

Robbers, he said,
Met them, and slew him; by no single strength,
But multitude of hands.

ŒDIPUS

How could your robber
Have dared so far—except there were some practice
With gold from hence?

CREON

Why, it seemed probable.
But, Laius dead, no man stood up to help
Amid our ills.

ŒDIPUS

What ill was in the way,
Which, when a sovereignty had lapsed like this,
Kept you from searching of it out?

CREON

The Sphinx
With her enigma forced us to dismiss
Things out of sight, and look to our own steps.

130

ŒDIPUS

Well, I will have it all to light again.
Right well did Phœbus, yea and well did you
Insist on this observance toward the dead;
So shall you see me, as of right, with you,
Venging this country and the God together.
Why, 'tis not for my neighbours' sake, but mine,
I shall dispel this plague-spot; for the man,
Whoever it may be, who murdered him,
Lightly might hanker to serve me the same.
I benefit myself in aiding him.

140

Up then, my children, straightway, from the floor;
 Take up your votive branches; let some other
 Gather the tribes of Cadmus hitherward;
 Say, I will make clean work. Please Heaven, our state
 Shall soon appear happy, or desperate.

PRIEST

Come children, let us rise; it was for this,
 Which he himself proclaims, that we came hither.
 Now may the Sender of these oracles,
 In saving and in plague-staying, Phœbus, come! 150

Exeunt CREON, PRIEST and THEBANS. *ŒDIPUS retires.*

Enter THEBAN SENATORS, *as Chorus.*

Chorus

I. 1.

O Prophecy of Jove, whose words are sweet,
 With what doom art thou sent
 To glorious Thebes, from Pytho's gilded seat?
 I am distraught with fearful wonderment,
 I thrill with terror, and wait reverently—
 Yea, Io Pæan, Delian lord, on thee!
 What matter thou wilt compass—either strange,
 Or once again recurrent as the seasons change,
 Offspring of golden Hope, immortal Oracle,
 Tell me, O tell!

I. 2.

Athena first I greet with invocation,
 Daughter of Jove, divine!
 Next Artemis thy sister, who this nation 160
 Keepeth, high seated in the encircling shrine,
 Filled with her praises, of our market-place,
 And Phœbus, shooting arrows far through space;
 Appear ye Three, the averters of my fate!
 If e'er before, when mischief rose upon the state,
 Ye quenched the flames of evil, putting them away,
 Come—come to-day!

II. 1.

Woe, for unnumbered are the ills we bear!
 Sickness pervades our hosts; 170
 Nor is there any spear of guardian care,
 Wherewith a man might save us, found in all our coasts.
 For all the fair soil's produce now no longer springs;
 Nor women from the labour and loud cries
 Of their child-births arise;
 And you may see, flying like a bird with wings,
 One after one, outspeeding the resistless brand,
 Pass—to the Evening Land.

II. 2.

In countless hosts our city perisheth.
 Her children on the plain 180
 Lie all unpitied—pitiless—breeding death.
 Our wives meanwhile, and white-haired mothers in their train,
 This way and that, suppliant, along the altar-side
 Sit, and bemoan their doleful maladies;
 Like flame their pæans rise,
 With wailing and lament accompanied;
 For whose dear sake O Goddess, O Jove's golden child,
 Send Help with favour mild!

III. 1.

And Ares the Destroyer, him who thus— 190
 Not now in harness of brass shields, as wont—
 Ringed round with clamour, meets us front to front
 And fevers us,
 O banish from our country! Drive him back,
 With winds upon his track,
 On to the chamber vast of Amphitrite,
 Or that lone anchorage, the Thracian main;
 For now, if night leave bounds to our annoy,
 Day levels all again;
 Wherefore, O father, Zeus, thou that dost wield the might 200
 Of fire-fraught light,
 Him with thy bolt destroy!

III. 2.

Next, from the bendings of thy golden string
 I would see showered thy artillery
 Invincible, marshalled to succour me,
 Lycean King!
 Next, those flame-bearing beams, arrows most bright,
 Which Artemis by night

Through Lycian highlands speeds her scattering;
 Thou too, the Evian, with thy Mænad band,
 Thou golden-braided patron of this land 210
 Whose visage glows with wine,
 O save us from the god whom no gods honour! Hear,
 Bacchus! Draw near,
 And light thy torch of pine!

Enter ŒDIPUS, attended.

ŒDIPUS

You are at prayers; but for your prayers' intent
 You may gain help, and of your ills relief,
 If you will minister to the pestilence,
 And hearken and receive my words, which I—
 A stranger to this tale, and to the deed 220
 A stranger—shall pronounce; for of myself
 I could not follow up the traces far,
 Not having any key. But, made since then
 A fellow-townsmen to the townsmen here,
 To all you Cadmeans I thus proclaim;
 Whichever of you knows the man, by whom
 Laius the son of Labdacus was slain,
 Even if he is afraid, having himself
 Suppressed the facts that made against himself,
 I bid that man shew the whole truth to me;
 For he shall suffer no disparagement,
 Except to quit the land, unscathed. Again, 230
 If any knows another—say some stranger
 To have been guilty, let him not keep silence;
 For I will pay him the reward, and favour
 Shall be his due beside it. But again,
 If you will hold your peace, and any man
 From self or friend in terror shall repel
 This word of mine, then—you must hear me say
 What I shall do. Whoe'er he be, I order
That of this land, whose power and throne are mine,
None entertain him, none accost him, none
Cause him to share in prayers or sacrifice
Offered to Heaven, or pour him lustral wave, 240

But all men from their houses banish him ;
Since it is he contaminates us all,
Even as the Pythian oracle divine
Revealed but now to me. Such is my succour
Of him that's dead, and of the Deity.
And on the guilty head I imprecate
That whether by himself he has lain covert,
Or joined with others, without happiness,
Evil, in evil, he may pine and die.
And for myself I pray, if with my knowledge
He should become an inmate of my house, 250
That I may suffer all that I invoked
On these just now. Moreover all these things
I charge you to accomplish, in behalf
Of me, and of the God, and of this land,
So ruined, barren and forsaken of Heaven.
For even though the matter had not been
By Heaven enjoined you, 'twas unnatural
You should have suffered it to pass uncleansed,
A man most noble having been slain, a king too !
Rather, you should have searched it out ; but now,
Since I am vested with the government
Which he held once, and have his marriage-bed,
And the same wife ; and since our progeny— 260
If his had not miscarried—had sprung from us
With common ties of common motherhood—
Only that Fate came heavy upon his head—
On these accounts I, as for my own father,
Will fight this fight, and follow out every clue,
Seeking to seize the author of his murder—
The scion of Labdacus and Polydore
And earlier Cadmus and Agenor old ;
And such as disobey—the Gods I ask
Neither to raise them harvest from the ground 270
Nor children from the womb, but that they perish
By this fate present, and yet worse than this ;
While you, the other Cadmeans, who approve,
Justice assist with favour evermore,
And all the Gods accompany for good !

I SENATOR

Even as thou didst adjure me, so, my king,
I will reply. I neither murdered him,
Nor can point out the murderer. For the quest—
To tell us who on earth has done this deed
Belonged to Phœbus, by whose word it came.

ŒDIPUS

Well urged; but to compel divinities 280
To what they will not, passes all men's power.

I SENATOR

I would say something which appears to me
The second chance to this.

ŒDIPUS

And your third, also—
If such you have—by all means tell it.

I SENATOR

Sir,
Tiresias above all men, I am sure,
Ranks as a seer next Phœbus, king with king;
Of him we might enquire and learn the truth
With all assurance.

ŒDIPUS

That is what I did;
And with no slackness; for by Creon's advice
I sent, twice over; and for some time, now,
'Tis strange he is not here.

I SENATOR

Then all the rest
Are but stale words and dumb. 290

ŒDIPUS

What sort of words?
I am weighing every utterance.

I SENATOR

He was said
To have been killed by footpads.

ŒDIPUS

So I heard;
But he who saw it is himself unseen.

I SENATOR

Well, if his bosom holds a grain of fear,
Curses like yours he never will abide!

ŒDIPUS

Whom the deed awed not, speaking will not scare.

I SENATOR

Then there is one to expose him: here they come,
Bringing the godlike seer, the only man
Who has in him the tongue that cannot lie.

Enter TIRESIAS, led by a Boy.

ŒDIPUS

Tiresias, thou who searchest everything, 300
Communicable or nameless, both in heaven
And on the earth—thou canst not see the city,
But knowest no less what pestilence visits it,
Wherefrom our only saviour and defence
We find, sir king, in thee. For Phœbus—if
Thou dost not know it from the messengers—
To us, who sent to ask him, sent word back,
That from this sickness no release should come,
Till we had found and slain the men who slew
Laius, or driven them, banished, from the land.
Wherefore do thou—not sparing augury, 310
Either through birds, or any other way
Thou hast of divination—save thyself,
And save the city, and me; save the whole mass
By this dead corpse infected; for in thee

Stands our existence ; and for men, to help
With might and main is of all tasks the highest.

TIRESIAS

Alas, alas ! How heavy a thing is wisdom,
Where it can serve no purpose to be wise !
And I forgot it, though I knew this well ;
Else I had not come hither.

ŒDIPUS

But what is it ?
How out of heart thou hast come !

TIRESIAS

Let me go home ; 320
So shalt thou bear thy load most easily—
If thou wilt take my counsel—and I mine.

ŒDIPUS

Thou speak'st not loyally, nor with goodwill
Towards the State that bred thee, cheating her
Of this response !

TIRESIAS

Because I do not see
Thy words, not even thine, going to the mark ;
So, not to be in the same plight—

ŒDIPUS

For Heaven's sake,
If thou hast knowledge, do not turn away,
When all of us implore thee suppliant !

TIRESIAS

Ye
Have all no knowledge ; but I never will
Reveal my troubles—that I say not thine.

ŒDIPUS

What, you do know, and will not speak ? Your mind 330
Is to betray us, and destroy the city ?

TIRESIAS

I will not bring remorse upon myself
And upon you. Why do you search these matters?
Vain, vain! I will not tell you.

ŒDIPUS

Worst of traitors!
For you would rouse a very stone to wrath—
Will you not speak out ever, but stand thus
Relentless and persistent?

TIRESIAS

My offence
You censure; but your own, at home, you see not,
And yet blame me!

ŒDIPUS

Who would not take offence,
Hearing the words in which you flout the city? 340

TIRESIAS

Well, it will come; keep silence as I may.

ŒDIPUS

And what will come should I not hear from you?

TIRESIAS

I will declare no further. Storm at this,
If't please you, to the wildest height of anger!

ŒDIPUS

At least I will not, being so far in anger,
Spare anything of what is clear to me:
Know, I suspect you joined to hatch the deed;
Yea, did it—all but slaying with your own hands;
And if you were not blind, I should aver
The act was your work only!

TIRESIAS

Was it so?

I charge you to abide by your decree 350
As you proclaimed it; nor from this day forth
Speak word to these, or me; being of this land
Yourself the abominable contaminator!

ŒDIPUS

So shamelessly set you this story on foot,
And think, perhaps, you shall go free?

TIRESIAS

I am

Free! for I have in me the strength of truth.

ŒDIPUS

Who prompted you? for from your art it was not!

TIRESIAS

Yourself! You made me speak, against my will.

ŒDIPUS

Speak! What? Repeat, that I may learn it better!

TIRESIAS

Did you not understand me at first hearing, 360
Or are you tempting me, when you say "Speak!"

ŒDIPUS

Not so to say for certain; speak again.

TIRESIAS

I say that you are Laius' murderer—
He whom you seek.

ŒDIPUS

Not without chastisement
Shall you twice over utter wounds!

TIRESIAS

Then shall I

Say something else, that may incense you more?

ŒDIPUS

Just as you please ; it will be said in vain.

TIRESIAS

I say you know not the deep infamy
Of your relations with those nearest you,
And see not in what evil plight you stand.

ŒDIPUS

Do you expect to go on revelling
In utterances like this?

TIRESIAS

Yes, if the truth
Has any force at all.

ŒDIPUS

Why so it has,
Except for you ; it is not so with you ;
Blind as you are in eyes, and ears, and mind !

TIRESIAS

Fool, you reproach me as not one of these
Shall not reproach you, soon!

ŒDIPUS

You cannot hurt me,
Nor any other who beholds the light,
Your life being all one night.

TIRESIAS

Nor is it fated
You by my hand should fall; Apollo is
Sufficient; he will bring it all to pass.

ŒDIPUS

Are these inventions Creon's work, or yours?

TIRESIAS

Your bane is no-ways Creon, but your own self.

ŒDIPUS

O riches, and dominion, and the craft 380
That excels craft, and makes life enviable,
How vast the grudge that is nursed up for you,
When for this sovereignty, which the state
Committed to my hands, unsought-for, free,
Creon, the trusty, the familiar friend,
With secret mines covets to oust me from it,
And has suborned a sorcerer like this,
An engine-botching crafty cogging knave,
Who has no eyes to see with, but for gain,
And was born blind in the art! Why, tell me now,
How stand your claims to prescience? How came it,
When the oracular monster was alive, 391
You said no word to set this people free?
And yet it was not for the first that came
To solve her riddle; sooth was needed then,
Which you could not afford; neither from birds,
Nor any inspiration; till I came,
The unlettered Œdipus, and ended her,
By sleight of wit, untaught of augury—
I whom you now seek to expel, in hope
To stand upon the steps of Creon's throne! 400
You and the framer of this plot methinks
Shall rue your exorcism! Dotard you seem,
Else by experience you had recognized
What thoughts these are you think!

I SENATOR

As we conceive,
His words appear (and, Œdipus, your own,)
To have been said in anger; now not such
Our need, but rather to consider this—
How best to interpret the God's oracle.

TIRESIAS

King as you are, we must be peers at least
In argument; I am your equal, there;
For I am Loxias' servant, and not yours; 410
So never need be writ of Creon's train.

And since you have reproached me with my blindness,
 I say—you have your sight, and do not see
 What evils are about you, nor with whom,
 Nor in what home you are dwelling. Do you know
 From whom you are? Yea, you are ignorant
 That to your own you are an enemy,
 Whether on earth, alive, or under it.
 Soon from this land shall drive you, stalking grim,
 Your mother's and your father's two-edged curse,
 With eyes then dark, though they look proudly now.
 What place on earth shall not be harbour, then, 420
 For your lamenting? What Cithæron-peak
 Shall not be resonant soon, when you discern
 What marriage-song was that, which wafted you
 On a fair voyage, to foul anchorage
 Under yon roof? and multitudes besides
 Of ills you know not of, shall level you
 Down to your self—down to your children! Go,
 Trample on Creon, and on this mouth of mine;
 But know, there is not one of all mankind
 That shall be bruised more utterly than you.

ŒDIPUS

Must I endure to hear all this from him?
 Hence, to perdition! quickly hence! begone 430
 Back from these walls, and turn you home again.

TIRESIAS

But that you called me, I had not come hither.

ŒDIPUS

I did not know that you would utter folly;
 Else I had scarce sent for you, to my house.

TIRESIAS

I speak but as I am; in your sight foolish;
 Yet in your fathers', who begat you, wise.

ŒDIPUS

What fathers? Stop! Who was it begat me?

TIRESIAS

This day shall both beget you and destroy.

ŒDIPUS

How all too enigmatic and obscure
Is your discourse!

TIRESIAS

Were you not excellent
At solving riddles?

440

ŒDIPUS

Ay, reproach me with
The very things where you must own me great!

TIRESIAS

And yet this very fortune was your ruin!

ŒDIPUS

Well, if I saved this city, I care not.

TIRESIAS

Well,
I am going; and you, boy, take me home.

ŒDIPUS

Ay, let him.
Your turbulence impedes us, while you stay;
When you are gone, you can annoy no more.

Retires.

TIRESIAS

I go, having said that I came to say;
Not that I fear your frown; for you possess
No power to slay me; but I say to you—
The man you have been seeking, threatening him,
And loud proclaiming him for Laius' murder, 450
That man is here; believed a foreigner
Here sojourning; but shall be recognized
For Theban born hereafter; yet not pleased
In the event; for blind instead of seeing,

And poor for wealthy, to a foreign land,
 A staff to point his footsteps, he shall go.
 Also to his own sons he shall be found
 Related as a brother, though their sire,
 And of the woman from whose womb he came
 Both son and spouse; one that has raised up seed
To his own father, and has murdered him. 460
 Now get you in, and ponder what I say;
 And if you can detect me in a lie,
 Then come and say that I am no true seer.

Exeunt TIRESIAS and Boy.

Chorus

I. 1.

Who is he, who was said
 By the Delphian soothsaying rock
 To have wrought with hands blood-red
 Nameless unspeakable deeds?
 Time it were that he fled
 Faster than storm-swift steeds!
 For upon him springs with a shock,
 Armed in thunder and fire, 470
 The Child of Jove, at the head
 Of the Destinies dread,
 That follow, and will not tire.

I. 2.

For a word but now blazed clear
 From Parnassus' snow-covered mound,
 To hunt down the Unknown!
 He, through the forest drear,
 By rocks, by cavernous ways,
 Stalks, like a bull that strays,
 Heartsore, footsore, alone;
 Flying from Earth's central seat, 480
 Flying the oracular sound
 Which with swift wings' beat
 For ever circles him round.

II. 1.

Of a truth dark thoughts, yea dark and fell,
 The augur wise doth arouse in me,
 Who neither assent, nor yet gainsay;

And what to affirm, I cannot tell;
But I flutter in hope, unapt to see
Things of to-morrow, or to-day.

Why in Polybus' son they should find a foe,
Or he in the heirs of Labdacus, 490
I know no cause, or of old, or late,
In test whereof I am now to go
Against the repute of Œdipus,
To avenge a Labdakid's unknown fate.

II. 2.

True, Zeus indeed, and Apollo, are wise,
And knowers of what concerns mankind;
But that word of a seer, a man like me, 500
Weighs more than mine, for a man to prize,
Is all unsure. Yea, one man's mind
May surpass another's in subtlety;

But never will I, till I see the rest,
Assent to those who accuse him now.
I saw how the air-borne Maiden came
Against him, and proved him wise, by the test,
And good to the state; and for this, I vow, 510
He shall not, ever, be put to shame.

Enter CREON.

CREON

I am come hither, fellow citizens,
Because I have been told King Œdipus
Lays grievous accusations to my charge,
Which I will not endure. For if he deems
That in these troubles, in report or deed,
He has at my hands suffered anything
Tending to harm him, why, I do not care
To go on living long, bearing the blame.
The injury that such a word may do 520
Is no mere trifle, but more vast than any,
If I am to be called a criminal
Here in the town, and by my friends, and you.

I SENATOR

Nay, the reproach, it may be, rather came
Through stress of anger, than advisedly.

CREON

But it was plainly said, by my advice
The prophet gave false answers.

I SENATOR

It was said ;
But how advised I know not.

CREON

Was this charge
Of a set mind, and with set countenance
Imputed against me ?

I SENATOR

I do not know.
I have no eyes for what my masters do. 530
But here he comes out of the house, himself.

Enter ŒDIPUS.

ŒDIPUS

Fellow, how cam'st thou hither? Dost thou boast
So great a front of daring, as to come
Under my roof, the assassin clear of me,
And manifest pirate of my royalty?
Tell me, by heaven, did you detect in me
The bearing of a craven, or a fool,
That you laid plans to do it ; or suppose
I should not recognize your hand in this
With craft approaching, and defend myself?
Is it not folly, this attempt of yours, 540
Without a following, without friends, to hunt
After a throne, a thing which is achieved
By aid of followers and much revenue?

CREON

Do me this favour; hear me say as much
As you have said; and then, yourself decide.

ŒDIPUS

Thou art quick to talk, but I am slow to learn
Of thee; for I have found thee contrary
And dangerous to me.

CREON

Now, this same thing
First hear, how I shall state it.

ŒDIPUS

Do not tell me—that thou art not a villain !

CREON

If you suppose your arrogance weighs aught
Apart from reason, you are much astray.

550

ŒDIPUS

If you suppose you can escape the pain
Due for a kinsman's wrong, you are astray!

CREON

You speak with justice; I agree! But tell me,
How is it that you say I injured you?

ŒDIPUS

Did you persuade me that I ought to send
To fetch that canting soothsayer, or no?

CREON

Why yes, and now, I am of the same mind, still.

ŒDIPUS

How long is it since Laius—

CREON

What? I know not.

ŒDIPUS

Died—disappeared, murdered by violence? 560

CREON

Long seasons might be numbered, long gone by.

ŒDIPUS

Well, did this seer then practise in the craft?

CREON

Yes, just as wise, and just as much revered.

ŒDIPUS

And did he at that time say one word of me?

CREON

Well, nowhere in my presence, anyhow.

ŒDIPUS

But did not you hold inquest for the dead?

CREON

We did, of course; and got no evidence.

ŒDIPUS

Well then, how came it that this wiseacre
Did not say these things then?

CREON

I do not know.
In matters where I have no cognizance
I hold my tongue.

ŒDIPUS

This much, at least, you know, 570
And if you are wise, will say!

CREON

And what is that?
For if I know it, I shall not refuse.

OEDIPUS

Why, that unless he had conspired with you
He never would have said that Laius' murder
Was of my doing!

CREON

If he says so, you know.
Only I claim to learn that first from you,
Which you put now to me.

OEDIPUS

Learn anything!
For I shall not be found a murderer.

CREON

Well then; you have my sister to your wife?

OEDIPUS

There's no denying that question.

CREON

And with her
Rule equal, and in common hold the land?

OEDIPUS

All she may wish for she obtains of me. 580

CREON

And make I not a third, equal with you?

OEDIPUS

Ay, there appears your friendship's falsity.

CREON

Not if you reason with yourself, as I.
And note this first; whether you can think that any
Would rather choose a sovereignty, with fears,
Than the same power, with undisturbed repose?
Neither am I, by nature, covetous
To be a king, rather than play the king,

Nor any man who has sagacity.
Now I have all things, without fear, from you ; 590
Reigned I myself, I must do much I hated.
How were a throne, then, pleasanter for me
Than painless empire and authority?
I am not yet so blind as to desire
Aught beside honour, joined with interest.
Now am I hail-fellow-well-met with all ;
Now every man gives me good-morrow ; now
The waiters on your favour fawn on me ;
For all their prospering depends thereby.
Then how should I exchange this lot for yours ?
A mind well-balanced cannot turn to crime. 600
I neither am in love with this design,
Nor, in a comrade, would I suffer it.
For proof of which, first, go to Pytho ; ask
For the oracles, if I declared them truly ;
Next, if you can detect me in the act
Of any conjuration with the seer,
Then, by a double vote, not one alone,
Mine and your own, take me, and take my life ;
But do not, on a dubious argument,
Charge me beside the facts. For just it is not,
To hold bad men for good, good men for bad, 610
Without a cause ; rather I count it equal
To throw away a friend, a worthy one,
And one's own life, which most of all one loves.
Ah well ; in time, you will see these things plainly ;
For time alone shews a man's honesty,
But in one day you may assert his guilt.

I SENATOR

His words sound fair—to one who fears to fall ;
For swift in counsel is unsafe, my liege.

ŒDIPUS

When he who plots against me in the dark
Comes swiftly on, I must be swift in turn.

If I stay quiet, his ends will have been gained, 620
And mine all missed.

CREON

What is it that you want?
To expel me from the country?

ŒDIPUS

Not at all.
Your death I wish for, not your banishment.

CREON

Not without shewing, first, what it is to envy!

ŒDIPUS

You will not heed me, nor submit to me?

CREON

Because I see you mean injuriously.

ŒDIPUS

Not to myself!

CREON

No more you ought to me!

ŒDIPUS

You are a traitor!

CREON

What if you are no judge?

ŒDIPUS

I must be ruler.

CREON

Not if you rule badly.

ŒDIPUS

City, my city!

CREON

The city is mine too,
And not yours only.

630

I SENATOR

Good my lords, have done.
Here is Jocasta; in good time, I see her
Come to you from the palace; with her aid
—Your present quarrel should be ended well.

Enter JOCASTA.

JOCASTA

Unhappy men, what was it made you raise
This senseless broil of words? Are you not both
Ashamed of stirring private grievances,
The land being thus afflicted? Get you in—
And, Creon, do you go home; push not mere nothing
On to some terrible calamity!

CREON

Sister, your husband Œdipus thinks fit
To treat me villanously; choosing for me
Of two bad things, one; to expatriate me,
Or seize and kill me.

640

ŒDIPUS

I admit it, wife;
For I have found him out in an offence
Against my person, joined with treachery.

CREON

So may I never thrive, but with a curse
Perish, if I have done a thing to you
Of what you charge against me!

JOCASTA

Œdipus!

O in Heaven's name believe it! Above all
Revere this oath in heaven; secondly
Myself, and these, who stand before you here.

I SENATOR

*Hear her, my king! With wisdom and goodwill
I pray you hear!*

ŒDIPUS

What would you have me grant? 650

I SENATOR

*Respect his word; no bauble, heretofore;
And by this oath made weighty.*

ŒDIPUS

Do you know

For what you ask?

I SENATOR

I do.

ŒDIPUS

Say what you mean, then!

I SENATOR

*You should not, ever cast into disgrace,
The friend, who has abjured it, on a charge
Void of clear proof.*

ŒDIPUS

Now, understand it well;
Seek this, you seek my death or exile!

I SENATOR

*Nay,
By the Sun-god, first of all Gods in heaven! 660
So may I perish, to the uttermost,
Cut off from Heaven, without the help of men,
If I have such a thought! But the land's waste
Will break my heart with grief—and that these woes,
Your strifes, are added to its former woes.*

ŒDIPUS

Well, let him go, though I get slain outright,
Or thrust by force, dishonoured, from the land; 670

Your voice, not his, makes me compassionate,
 Pleading for mercy; wheresoe'er he goes,
 I can detest him!

CREON

You display your spleen
 In yielding; but, when you forget yourself,
 Are formidable! Tempers such as yours
 Most grievous are to their own selves to bear,
 Not without justice.

ŒDIPUS

Leave me; get you gone!

CREON

I go; you know me not; these know me honest.

Exit.

I SENATOR

*Lady, what hinders you from taking him
 Into the house?*

JOCASTA

I would know how this happened. 680

I SENATOR

*A blind surmise arose, out of mere babble;
 But even what is unjust inflicts a sting.*

JOCASTA

On part of both?

I SENATOR

Yes truly.

JOCASTA

And what was said?

I SENATOR

*Enough it seems, enough it seems to me,
 Under the former trouble of the land,
 To leave this where it lies.*

OEDIPUS

Do you perceive
How far you are carried—a well-meaning man!
Slurring my anger thus, and blunting it?

I SENATOR

*I said it, O my king, not once alone—
But be assured, I should have shewn myself* 690
*Robbed of my wits, useless for work of wit,
Renouncing thee! who didst impel the sails
Of my dear land, baffled mid straits, right onward,
And if thou could'st, would'st waft her safely now!*

JOCASTA

For Heaven's sake tell me too, my lord, what was it
Caused you so deep an anger?

OEDIPUS

I will tell you; 700
For I respect you, lady, more than these;
'Twas Creon—at plots which he has laid for me.

JOCASTA

If you will charge the quarrel in plain terms,
Why speak!

OEDIPUS

He says that I am Laius' slayer.

JOCASTA

Of his own knowledge, or on hearsay?

OEDIPUS

Nay,
But by citation of a knavish seer;
As for himself, he keeps his words blame-free.

JOCASTA

Now set you free from thought of that you talk of;
Listen, and learn from me, the soothsayer's art
Is shared by nothing mortal! Proof of this 710

I'll shew you in one word. To Laius once
 There came an oracle, I do not say
 From Phoebus' self, but from his ministers,
 That so it should befall, that he should die
 By a son's hands, whom he should have by me.
 And him—the story goes—robbers abroad
 Have murdered, at a place where three roads meet;
 While from our son's birth not three days went by
 Before, with ancles pinned, he cast him out,
 By hands of others, on a pathless moor.
 And so Apollo did not bring about
 That he should be his father's murderer;
 Nor yet that Laius should endure the stroke
 At his son's hands, of which he was afraid.
 This is what came of soothsayers' oracles;
 Whereof take thou no heed. That which we lack,
 If a God seek, himself will soon reveal.

720

ŒDIPUS

What perturbation and perplexity
 Take hold upon me, woman, hearing you!

JOCASTA

What stress of trouble is on you, that you say so?

ŒDIPUS

I thought I heard you say Laius was slain
 Where three roads meet!

730

JOCASTA

Yes, so the rumour ran,
 And so runs still.

ŒDIPUS

And where might be the spot
 Where this befell?

JOCASTA

Phocis the land is named;
 There are two separate roads converge in one
 From Daulia and Delphi.

ŒDIPUS

And what time
Has passed since then?

JOCASTA

It was but just before
You were installed as ruler of the land,
The tidings reached the city.

ŒDIPUS

God of Heaven!
What would'st thou do unto me!

JOCASTA

Œdipus,
What is it on your mind?

ŒDIPUS

Ask me not yet.
But Laius—say, what was he like? what prime
Of youth had he attained to?

740

JOCASTA

He was tall;
The first white flowers had blossomed in his hair;
His figure was not much unlike your own.

ŒDIPUS

Me miserable! It seems I have but now
Proffered myself to a tremendous curse
Not knowing!

JOCASTA

How say you? I tremble, O my lord,
To gaze upon you!

ŒDIPUS

I am sore afraid
The prophet was not blind; but you will make
More certain, if you tell me one thing more.

JOCASTA

Indeed I tremble; but the thing you ask
I'll answer, when I know it.

ŒDIPUS

Was he going 750
Poorly attended, or with many spears
About him, like a prince?

JOCASTA

But five in all;
One was a herald; and one carriage held
Laius himself.

ŒDIPUS

O, it is plain already!
Woman, who was it told this tale to you?

JOCASTA

A servant, who alone came safe away.

ŒDIPUS

Is he perchance now present, in the house?

JOCASTA

Why no; for after he was come from thence,
And found you governing, and Laius dead,
He came and touched my hand, and begged of me 760
To send him to the fields and sheep-meadows,
So he might be as far as possible
From eyesight of the townsmen; and I sent him;
For he was worthy, for a slave, to obtain
Even greater favours.

ŒDIPUS

Could we have him back
Quickly?

JOCASTA

We could. But why this order?

ŒDIPUS

Wife,
I fear me I have spoken far too much;
Wherefore I wish to see him.

JOCASTA

He shall come!
But I am worthy, in my turn, to know
What weighs so heavily upon you, Sir? 770

ŒDIPUS

And so you shall; seeing that I have gone
So far in apprehension. For to whom
Could I impart, passing through such a need,
More honourable—if that were all—than you?
—I am the son of Polybus of Corinth,
And of a Dorian mother, Merope.
And I was counted most preeminent
Among the townsmen there; up to the time
A circumstance befell me, of this fashion—
Worthy of wonder, though of my concern
Unworthy. At the board a drunken fellow
Over his cups called me a changeling; 780
And I, being indignant—all that day
Hardly refrained—but on the morrow went
And taxed my parents with it to their face;
Who took the scandal grievously, of him
Who launched the story. Well, with what they said
I was content; and yet the thing still galled me;
For it spread far. So without cognizance
Of sire or mother I set out to go
To Pytho. Phœbus sent me of my quest
Bootless away; but other terrible
And strange and lamentable things revealed, 790
Saying I should wed my mother, and produce
A race intolerable for men to see,
And be my natural father's murderer.
When I heard that, measuring where Corinth stands

Ever thereafter by the stars alone,
Where I might never think to see fulfilled
The scandals of ill prophecies of me,
I fled, an exile. As I journeyed on,
I found myself upon the self-same spot
Where, you say, this king perished. In your ears,
Wife, I will tell the whole. When in my travels 800
I was come near this place where three roads meet,
There met me a herald, and a man that rode
In a colt-carriage, such as you describe,
And from the track the leader, by main force,
And the old man himself, would thrust me. I,
Being enraged, strike him who jostled me—
The driver, I mean—and when the old man saw me,
Watching as I was passing, from the car
He with his goad's fork smote me upon the head.
He paid, though! duly I say not; but in brief,
Smitten by the staff in this right hand of mine, 810
Out of the middle of the carriage straight
He rolls down headlong; and I slay them all!
But if there be anything to connect
This nameless man with Laius, who is now
More miserable than I am? Who on earth
Can have been born with more of hate from heaven?
Whom never citizen or stranger may
Receive into their dwellings, or accost,
But must thrust out of doors; and 'tis no other
Laid all these curses on myself, than I! 820
Yea, with embraces of the arms whereby
He perished, I pollute my victim's bed!
Am I not vile? Am I not all unclean?
If I must fly, and flying, never can
See my own folk, or on my native land
Set foot, or else must with my mother wed,
And slay my father Polybus, who begat
And bred me? Would he not speak truly of me
Who judged these things sent by some barbarous Power?
Never, you sacred majesties of Heaven, 830
Never may I behold that day; but pass

Out of men's sight, ere I shall see myself
Touched by the stain of such a destiny!

I SENATOR

My liege, these things affect us grievously;
Still, till you hear his story who was by,
Do not lose hope!

ŒDIPUS

Yea, so much hope is left,
Merely to wait for him, the herdsman.

JOCASTA

Well,
Suppose him here, what do you want of him?

ŒDIPUS

I'll tell you; if he should be found to say
Just what you said, I shall be clear from harm. 840

JOCASTA

What did you hear me say, that did not tally?

ŒDIPUS

You were just telling me that he made mention
Of "robbers"—"men"—as Laius' murderers.
Now if he shall affirm their number still,
I did not slay him. One cannot be the same
As many. But if he shall speak of one—
One individual, clearly then the deed
Already will have been brought home to me.

JOCASTA

But be assured, that was the word, quite plainly!
And now he cannot blot it out again.
Not I alone, but the whole city heard it. 850
Then, even if he shift from his first tale,
Not so, my lord, will he at all explain
The death of Laius, as it should have been,
Whom Loxias declared my son must slay!
And after all, the poor thing never killed him,

But died itself before! so that henceforth
 I do not mean to look to left or right
 For fear of soothsaying!

ŒDIPUS

You are well advised.
 Still, send and fetch the labourer; do not miss it. 860

JOCASTA

I will send quickly. Now let us go within.
 I would do nothing that displeases you.

Exeunt ŒDIPUS and JOCASTA.

Chorus

I. 1.

Let it be mine to keep
 The holy purity of word and deed
 Foreguided all by mandates from on high
 Born in the ethereal regions of the sky,
 Their only sire Olympus; which nor seed
 Of mortal man brought forth, nor Lethe cold
 Shall ever lay to sleep; 870
 In them Deity is great, and grows not old.

I. 2.

Pride is the germ of kings;
 Pride, when puffed up, vainly, with many things
 Unseasonable, unfitting, mounts on high,
 Only to plunge into necessity,
 Where feet are vain to serve her. But the task
 Propitious to the city GOD I ask 880
 Never to take away!
 GOD I will never cease to hold my stay.

II. 1.

But if any man proceed
 Insolently in word or deed,
 Without fear of right, or care
 For the seats where Virtues are,
 Him, for his ill-omened pride,
 Let an evil death betide!

If honestly his gear he will not gain,
 Nor keep himself from deeds unholy, 890
 Nor from inviolable things abstain,
 Blinded by folly.
 Where these things are, what mortal from his heart
 Dart upon dart
 Can hope to avert of indignation?
 Yea, and if acts like these are held in estimation,
 Why dance we here our part?

II. 2.

Never to the inviolate hearth
 At the navel of the earth,
 Nor to Abæ's fane, in prayer,
 Nor the Olympian, will I fare, 900
 If it shall not so befall
 Manifestly unto all.
 But O our king—if thou art named aright—
 Zeus, that art Lord of all things ever,
 Be this not hid from Thee, nor from Thy might
 Which endeth never.
 For now already men invalidate
 The dooms of Fate
 Uttered for Laius, fading slowly;
 Apollo's name and rites are nowhere now kept holy;
 Worship is out of date. 910

• *Enter JOCASTA, attended.*

JOCASTA

Lords of the land, it came into my heart
 To approach the temples of the Deities,
 Taking in hand these garlands, and this incense;
 For Œdipus lets his mind toss too lightly
 Upon the eddies of all kinds of grief;
 Nor will he, like a man of soberness,
 Measure the new by knowledge of the old,
 But is at mercy of whoever speaks,
 If he but speak the language of despair.
 I can do nothing by exhorting him.
 Wherefore, Lycean Phœbus, unto thee—
 For thou art very near us—I am come,
 Bringing these offerings, a petitioner 920

That thou afford us fair deliverance ;
 Since now we are all frightened, seeing him—
 The vessel's pilot, as 'twere—panic-stricken.

Enter a MESSENGER.

MESSENGER

Sirs, might I learn of you, where is the palace
 Of Œdipus the King? or rather, where
 He is himself, if you know, tell me.

I SENATOR

Stranger,
 This is his dwelling, and he is within ;
 This lady is his children's mother, too.

MESSENGER

A blessing ever be on hers and her,
 Who is, in such a perfect sort, his wife !

930

JOCASTA

The like be with you too, as you deserve,
 Sir, for your compliment. But say what end
 You come for, and what news you wish to tell.

MESSENGER

Good to the house, and to your husband, lady.

JOCASTA

Of what sort? and from whom come you?

MESSENGER

From Corinth.

In that which I am now about to say
 May you find pleasure! and why not? And yet
 Perhaps you may be sorry.

JOCASTA

But what is it?

How can it carry such ambiguous force?

MESSENGER

The dwellers in the land of Isthmia,
As was there said, intend to appoint him king. 940

JOCASTA

What! Is old Polybus no longer king?

MESSENGER

No, truly; he is Death's subject, in the grave.

JOCASTA

How say you, father? Is Polybus no more?

MESSENGER

I stake my life upon it, if I lie!

JOCASTA

Run, girl, and tell your master instantly.

Exit an attendant.

O prophecies of Gods, where are you now!
Œdipus fled, long since, from this man's presence,
Fearing to kill him; and now he has died
A natural death, not by his means at all!

Enter ŒDIPUS.

ŒDIPUS

O my most dear Jocasta, wife of mine, 950
Why did you fetch me hither from the house?

JOCASTA

Hear this man speak! Listen and mark, to what
The dark responses of the God are come!

ŒDIPUS

And who is this? What says he?

JOCASTA

He's from Corinth,

To tell us that your father Polybus
Lives no more, but is dead!

ŒDIPUS

What say you, sir?

Tell your own tale yourself.

MESSENGER

If first of all

I must deliver this for certainty,
Know well, that he has gone the way of mortals.

ŒDIPUS

Was it by treason, or some chance disease? 960

MESSENGER

A little shock prostrates an aged frame!

ŒDIPUS

Sickness, you mean, was my poor father's end?

MESSENGER

Yes, and old age; his term of life was full.

ŒDIPUS

Heigh ho! Why, wife! why should a man regard
The oracular hearth of Pytho, or the birds
Cawing above us, by whose canons I
Was to have slain my father? He is dead,
And buried out of sight; and here am I,
Laying no finger to the instrument,
(Unless, indeed, he pined for want of me,
And so, I killed him!) Well, Polybus is gone; 970
And with him all those oracles of ours
Bundled to Hades, for old songs, together!

JOCASTA

Did I not say so all along?

ŒDIPUS

You did;

But I was led astray by fear,

JOCASTA

Well, now

Let none of these predictions any more
Weigh on your mind !

ŒDIPUS

And how can I help dreading
My mother's bed ?

JOCASTA

But why should men be fearful,
O'er whom Fortune is mistress, and foreknowledge
Of nothing sure? Best take life easily,
As a man may. For that maternal wedding,
Don't be afraid ! for many men ere now 980
Have dreamt as much ; but he that by such dreams
Sets nothing, has the easiest life of it.

ŒDIPUS

All these things would have been well said of you,
Were not my mother living still ; but now,
She being alive, there is all need of dread ;
Though you say well.

JOCASTA

And yet your father's burial
Lets in much daylight !

ŒDIPUS

I acknowledge, much.
My fear's of her who lives.

MESSENGER

But at what woman
Are you dismayed ?

ŒDIPUS

At Merope, old man,
The wife of Polybus.

MESSENGER

And what of her
Causes you terror?

ŒDIPUS

A dark oracle,
Stranger, from heaven.

MESSENGER

May it be put in words?
Or is it wrong another man should know it?

ŒDIPUS

No, not at all. Why, Loxias declared
That I should one day marry my own mother,
And with my own hands shed my father's blood.
Wherefore from Corinth I have kept away
Far, for long years; and prospered; none the less
It is most sweet to see one's parents' face.

MESSENGER

And in this apprehension you became
An emigrant from Corinth? 1000

ŒDIPUS

And, old man,
Desiring not to be a parricide.

MESSENGER

Why should I not deliver you, my liege—
Since my intent in coming here was good—
Out of this fear?

ŒDIPUS

Indeed you would obtain
Good reward from me.

MESSENGER

And indeed for this
Chiefest I came, that upon your return
I might in some way benefit.

ŒDIPUS

But I

Will never go, to meet my parents there!

MESSENGER

O son, 'tis plain you know not what you do!

ŒDIPUS

How so, old man? in Heaven's name tell me!

MESSENGER

If

On this account you shun the journey home!

1010

ŒDIPUS

Of course I fear lest Phœbus turn out true.

MESSENGER

Lest through your parents you incur foul stain?

ŒDIPUS

Yes, father, yes ; that is what always scares me.

MESSENGER

Now do you know you tremble, really, at nothing?

ŒDIPUS

How can that be, if I was born their child?

MESSENGER

Because Polybus was nought akin to you!

ŒDIPUS

What, did not Polybus beget me?

MESSENGER

No,

No more than I did; just so much as I!

ŒDIPUS

How, my own sire no more than—nobody?

MESSENGER

But neither he begat you, nor did I.

1020

ŒDIPUS

Then from what motive did he call me son?

MESSENGER

Look here; he took you as a gift from me.

ŒDIPUS

And loved me then, so much, at second hand?

MESSENGER

Yes, his long childlessness prevailed on him.

ŒDIPUS

And did you find or purchase me, to give him?

MESSENGER

I found you in Cithæron's wooded dells.

ŒDIPUS

How came you to be journeying in these parts?

MESSENGER

I tended flocks upon the mountains here.

ŒDIPUS

You were a shepherd, and you ranged for hire!

MESSENGER

But at the same time your preserver, son!

1030

ŒDIPUS

You found me in distress? What was my trouble?

MESSENGER

Your ancle joints may witness.

ŒDIPUS

O, why speak you

Of that old evil?

MESSENGER

I untied you, when
You had the soles of both your feet bored through.

ŒDIPUS

A shameful sort of swaddling bands were mine.

MESSENGER

Such, that from them you had the name you bear.

ŒDIPUS

Tell me, by heaven! at sire's or mother's hand—

MESSENGER

I do not know; the donor knows of this
Better than I.

ŒDIPUS

You got me from another?
You did not find me?

MESSENGER

No, another shepherd
Gave you to me.

1040

ŒDIPUS

Who was he? are you able
To point him out?

MESSENGER

They said that he was one
Of those who followed Laius, whom you know.

ŒDIPUS

Him who was once the monarch of this land?

MESSENGER

Precisely! This man was his herdsman.

ŒDIPUS

Now

Is this man still alive for me to see?

MESSENGER

You must know best, the people of the place.

ŒDIPUS

Is any here among you bystanders,
Who knows the herdsman whom he designates,
From seeing him, either in the fields or here?
Speak! it is time for this to be cleared up.

1050

I SENATOR

I think he is no other than that peasant
You were desiring to behold before;
But she could say better than any one—
Jocasta.

ŒDIPUS

Lady, you remember him
Whose coming we were wishing for just now;
Does he mean him?

JOCASTA

Why ask who 'twas he spoke of?
Nay, never mind—never remember it—
'Twas idly spoken!

ŒDIPUS

Nay, it cannot be
That having such a clue I should refuse
To solve the mystery of my parentage!

JOCASTA

For Heaven's sake, if you care for your own life, 1060
Don't seek it! I am sick, and that's enough!

ŒDIPUS

Courage! At least, if I be thrice a slave,
Born so three-deep, it cannot injure you!

JOCASTA

But I beseech you, hearken! Do not do it!

ŒDIPUS

I will not hearken—not to know the whole.

JOCASTA

I mean well; and I tell you for the best!

ŒDIPUS

What you call best is an old sore of mine.

JOCASTA

Wretch, what thou art O might'st thou never know!

ŒDIPUS

Will some one go and fetch the herdsman hither?
She is welcome to her gilded lineage!

1070

JOCASTA

O

Woe, woe, unhappy! This is all I have
To say to thee, and no word more, for ever!

Exit.

I SENATOR

Why has the woman vanished, Œdipus,
Driven so wild with grief? I am afraid
Out of her silence will break forth some trouble.

ŒDIPUS

Break out what will, I shall not hesitate
To trace my origin, however low;
But she, perhaps, having a woman's pride,
Of my unfit extraction is ashamed.
—I deem myself the child of Fortune! I
Shall not be shamed of her, who favours me;
Seeing I have her for mother; and the months,
My kinsmen, fashioned me—obscure and great.
Such being my birth, I cannot now turn out
Different—that I should leave my race unknown!

1080

Chorus

1.

If I am a true seer,
 My mind from error clear,
 Tomorrow's moon shall not pass over us,
 Ere, O Cithæron, we
 Shall magnify in thee 1090
 The land, the lap, the womb of Œdipus;
 And we shall hymn thy praises, for good things
 Of thy bestowing, done unto our kings.
 Yea, Phœbus, if thou wilt, amen, so might it be!

2.

Who bare thee, who, O boy?
 Was it some wood-nymph coy
 Sought to by Pan—one of the immortal maids— 1100
 Over the mountains wild?
 Or art thou Loxias' child?
 For dear to him are all the greenwood glades.
 Was it Cyllene's lord acquired a son,
 Or Bacchus, dweller on the heights, from one
 Of those he liest loves, Oreads of Helicon?

Enter Attendants with an Old Man, a Shepherd.

ŒDIPUS

If I may guess, who never met with him, 1110
 I think I see that herdsman, Senators,
 We have long been seeking; for his ripe old age
 Harmoniously accords with this man's measure;
 Besides, I recognize the men who bring him
 As of my household; but in certainty
 You can perhaps exceed me, who beheld
 The herdsman formerly.

I SENATOR

Why, to be sure,
 I recognize him; for he was a man
 Trusty as any Laius ever had
 About his pastures.

OEDIPUS

You I ask the first,
The Corinthian stranger; do you speak of him? 1120

MESSENGER

Yes, him you see.

OEDIPUS

Sirrah, old man, look here;
Answer my questions. Were you Laius' man?

OLD MAN

Truly his thrall; not bought, but bred at home.

OEDIPUS

Minding what work, or in what character?

OLD MAN

Most of my time I went after the flocks.

OEDIPUS

In what directions, chiefly, were your folds?

OLD MAN

There was Cithæron; and a bit near by.

OEDIPUS

Do you know this man, then? Did you see him there?

OLD MAN

Him? After what? What man do you mean?

OEDIPUS

Here present; did you ever meet with him? 1130
This fellow

OLD MAN

Not so to say off-hand, from memory.

MESSENGER

And that's no wonder, sir; but beyond doubt
I will remind him, though he has forgotten,

I am quite sure he knows, once on a time,
 When in the bit about Cithæron there—
 He with two flocks together, and I with one—
 I was his neighbour for three whole half years
 From spring-tide onward to the Bear-ward's day;
 And with the winter to my folds I drove,
 And he to Laius' stalls. Do I speak fact
 In any of these things, or do I not? 1140

OLD MAN

You speak the truth; but it was long ago.

MESSENGER

Come, say now, don't you mind that you then gave me
 A baby boy to bring up for my own?

OLD MAN

What do you mean? Why do you ask it me?

MESSENGER

This is the man, good fellow; who was then
 A youngling!

OLD MAN

Out upon you! Hold your peace!

ŒDIPUS

Nay, old man, do not chide him; for your words
 Deserve a chiding rather than his own!

OLD MAN

O best of masters, what is my offence?

ŒDIPUS

Not telling of that boy he asks about. 1150

OLD MAN

He says he knows not what! He is all astray!

ŒDIPUS

You will not speak of grace—you shall perforce!

OLD MAN

Do not for God's sake harm me, an old man!

ŒDIPUS

Quick, some one, twist his hands behind him!

OLD MAN

Wretch!

What have I done? What do you want to know?

ŒDIPUS

Did you give him that boy he asks about?

OLD MAN

I gave it him. Would I had died that day!

ŒDIPUS

Tell the whole truth, or you will come to it!

OLD MAN

I am undone far more, though, if I speak!

ŒDIPUS

The man is trifling with us, I believe.

1160

OLD MAN

No, no; I said I gave it, long ago!

ŒDIPUS

Where did you get it? At home, or from some other?

OLD MAN

It was not mine; another gave it me.

ŒDIPUS

Which of these citizens? and from what roof?

OLD MAN

Don't, master, for God's sake, don't ask me more!

ŒDIPUS

You are a dead man, if I speak again !

OLD MAN

Then—'twas a child—of Laius' household.

ŒDIPUS

What,

Slave-born? or one of his own family?

OLD MAN

O, I am at the horror, now, to speak !

ŒDIPUS

And I to hear. But I must hear—no less.

1170

OLD MAN

Truly it was called his son ; but she within,
Your lady, could best tell you how it was.

ŒDIPUS

Why, did she give it you?

OLD MAN

My lord, even so.

ŒDIPUS

For what?

OLD MAN

For me to make away with it.

ŒDIPUS

Herself the mother? miserable !

OLD MAN

In dread

Of evil prophecies—

ŒDIPUS

What prophecies?

OLD MAN

That he should kill his parents, rumour went.

ŒDIPUS

How came you then to give it to this old man?

OLD MAN

For pity, O my master! thinking he
 Would carry it away to other soil,
 From whence he came; but he to the worst of ends
 Saved it! for if thou art the man he says, 1180
 Sure thou wast born destined to misery!

ŒDIPUS

Woe! woe! It is all plain, indeed! O Light,
 This be the last time I shall gaze on thee,
 Who am revealed to have been born of those
 Of whom I ought not—to have wedded whom
 I ought not—and slain whom I might not slay!

Exit.

Chorus

I. 1.

O generations of mankind!
 How do I find
 Your lives nought worth at all!
 For who is he—what state
 Is there, more fortunate 1190
 Than only to seem great,
 And then, to fall?
 I having thee for pattern, and thy lot—
 Thine, O poor Œdipus—I envy not
 Aught in mortality;
 For this is he

I. 2.

Who, shooting far beyond the rest,
 Won wealth all-blest,
 Slaying, Zeus, thy monster-maid,
 Crook-taloned, boding; and 1200
 Who did arise and stand
 Betwixt death and our land,
 A tower of aid;

Yea for this cause thou hast been named our king,
 And honoured in the highest, governing
 The city of Thebæ great
 In royal state.

II. 1.

And now, who can be named more pitiable?
 Who with sad woes, who with mischances rude
 Stands closer yoked by life's vicissitude?
 O honoured head of Œdipus, for whom
 In the same large embraces there was room
 To come—child, to the birth—
 Sire, to the nuptial bower,
 How could the furrows of thy parent earth—
 How could they brook thee, O thou miserable,
 In silence, to this hour? 1210

II. 2.

Time found thee out—Time who sees everything—
 Unwittingly guilty; and arraigns thee now
 Consort ill-sorted, unto whom are bred
 Sons of thy getting, in thine own birth-bed.
 O scion of Laius' race,
 Would I had never never seen thy face!
 For I lament, even as from lips that sing
 Pouring a dirge; yet verily it was thou
 Gav'st me to rise 1220
 And breathe again, and close my watching eyes.

Enter a Second MESSENGER.

2 MESSENGER

O you most honoured ever of this land,
 What deeds have you to hear, what sights to see,
 What sorrow to endure, if you still care
 Loyally for the house of Labdacus!
 For I suppose Ister or Phasis' wave
 Never could purge this dwelling from the ills
 It covers—or shall instantly reveal,
 Invited, not inflicted; of all wounds,
 Those that seem wilful are the worst to bear. 1230

I SENATOR

There was no lack, in what we knew before,
Of lamentable; what have you more to say?

2 MESSENGER

The speediest of all tales to hear and tell;
The illustrious Jocasta is no more.

I SENATOR

Unhappy woman! From what cause?

2 MESSENGER

Self-slain.

Of what befell the saddest part is spared;
For you were not a witness. None the less
So far as I can tell it you shall hear
Her miserable story. When she passed 1240
So frantically inside the vestibule,
She went straight onward to the bed-chamber,
With both her hands tearing her hair; the doors
She dashed to as she entered, crying out
On Laius, long since dead, calling to mind
His fore-begotten offspring, by whose hands
He, she said, died, and left to his own seed
Its mother's most unnatural bearing-bed.
Nor did she not bewail that nuptial-couch
Where she brought forth, unhappy, brood on brood,
Spouse to her spouse, and children to her child. 1250
And then—I know no further how she perished;
For Œdipus brake in, crying aloud;
For whom it was impossible to watch
The ending of her misery; but on him
We gazed, as he went raging all about,
Beseeching us to furnish him a sword
And say where he could find his wife—no wife,
Rather the mother-soil both of himself
And children; and, as he raved thus, some Power
Shews him—at least, none of us present did.
Then, shouting loud, as if following some guide, 1260

He sprang upon the doors, and burst the bars
Out of their sockets, and alights within.
There we beheld his wife hanging, entwined
In a twined noose. He seeing her, with a groan
Looses the halter; then, when on the ground
Lay the poor wretch, followed a terrible scene.
For snatching from her dress the golden pins
Wherewith she was adorned, he lifted them,
And smote the nerves of his own eyeballs, saying 1270
Something like this—that they should see no more
Evils like those he had endured or wrought;
Darkling, thereafter, let them gaze on forms
He might not see, and fail to recognize
Faces he had desired! Chanting this burden,
Not once, but many times, he raised his hand
And stabbed his eyes; so that from both of them
The blood ran down his face, not drop by drop,
But all at once, in a dark shower of gore.
—These are the ills that from a two-fold fount, 1280
Not on one head, but upon wife and spouse,
Mingled together, have burst forth at last.
Their former pristine happiness indeed
Was happiness before; but in this hour
Shame—lamentation—Atè—death—of all
That has a name of evil, nought's away!

I SENATOR

And does he stand in any respite now
Of misery, poor soul?

2 MESSENGER

He calls aloud
For some one to undo the bolts, and shew
To all the Cadmeans him, his father's slayer—
His mother's—uttering words unhallowed—words
I may not speak; that he will cast himself 1290
Forth of the land, abide no more, to bring
The curse of his own cursing on the house,

But he lacks force, and guidance; for his sickness
Is more than man can bear. See for yourself;
For these gates open, and you will straight behold
A sight—such as even he that loathes must pity!

Enter ŒDIPUS blind.

Chorus

O suffering, despitful
For mankind to see!
Past all things frightful
E'er known to me!

What frenzy, O thou unhappy, is this that is come on thee? 1300

By what power aided,
Darting from far,
Hath ruin invaded
The course of thy star

With onslaughts more keen than the keenest, more fierce than the
fiercest that are?

Much would I learn of thee;
Would ask thee much;
Much would discern of thee,
Wert thou not such

As the sight is a terror to witness, the presence a horror to touch.

ŒDIPUS

Alas the day!
Where must I go?
The words I say
Flit to and fro—

1310

Whither? O Power divine, how didst thou leap forth, to my woe!

I SENATOR

To ills, intolerable to hear or see.

ŒDIPUS

O horrors that cover me!
Shadows of dread!
Cloud that comes over me
Of ills unsaid!

Storm not to be mastered or weathered, that beats, woe is me! on
my head!

Woe's me once more! How crowd upon my heart
Stings of these wounds, and memories of woe!

I SENATOR

No marvel if thou bear a double smart
And writhe, so stricken, with a two-fold throe! 1320

ŒDIPUS

Still art thou near me—
Still dost tend :
Still, to cheer me—
Blind—to the end
Thou abidest with me, and carest for me, O friend, my friend!

For strange thou art not ; but full well I know
That voice of thine, all darkling though I be.

I SENATOR

Rash man, how could'st thou bear to outrage so
Thine eyes? What Power was it, that wrought on thee?

ŒDIPUS

Apollo, Apollo fulfils,
O friends, my measure of ills— 1330
Fills my measure of woe;
Author was none, but I,
None other, of the blow;
For why was I to see,
When to descry
No sight on earth could have a charm for me?

I SENATOR

It was even as thou sayest.

ŒDIPUS

What was there left for sight?
What, that could give delight?
Or whose address,
O friends, could I still hear with happiness?
Lead me to exile straight, 1340
Lead me, O my friends, the great—
The most accurst of murderers, and even
Most hateful unto Heaven.

I SENATOR

Wretch for thy cunning, and for thy fate as well,
I would that I had never known thy name!

ŒDIPUS

May he perish, whoe'er 'twas drew me
Out of the cruel gyve
That bound my feet, on the lea!
He who saved me alive, 1350
Who rescued me from fate,
Shewing no kindness to me!
Sorrow so great,
Had I died then, had spared both mine and me.

I SENATOR

Fain were I too it had been so.

ŒDIPUS

Not then had I become
My father's murderer,
Nor wedded her I have my being from:
Whom now no God will bless, 1360
Child of incestuousness
In her that bare me, being the spouse of her;
Yea if aught ill worse than all ill be there,
That Œdipus must bear.

I SENATOR

I know not how to say thou hast done well;
For it were better for thee now to die,
Than to live on in blindness.

ŒDIPUS

Tell me not—
Give me no counsel now, that what is done 1370
Has not been done thus best. I do not know
The eyes wherewith I could have looked upon
My father—coming to the under-world,
Or my poor mother, when against them both
I have sinned sins, worse than a halter's meed.
Or, think you, was the sight of children, born
As they were born, desirable for me
To contemplate? Never for eyes of mine!

No, nor the city, nor the citadel,
Nor consecrated shrines of deities,
From which, to my most utter misery,
I, of all other men in Thebes the man 1380
Most bravely nurtured, cut myself away,
And of my own mouth dictated to all
To thrust out me, the impious—me, declared
Abominable of Heaven, and Laius' son.
Was I, who in myself made evident
So dark a stain, with unaverted eyes
To look on these? That least of all! Nay rather,
If there were any way to choke the fount
Of hearing, through my ears, I would have tried
To seal up all this miserable frame,
And live blind, deaf to all things; sweet it were
To dwell in fancy, out of reach of pain. 1390
—Cithæron! wherefore didst thou harbour me?
Why not at once have slain me? Never then
Had I displayed before the face of men
Who and from whom I am! O Polybus,
And Corinth, and the old paternal roof
I once called mine, with what thin film of honour,
Corruption over-skinned, you fostered me,
Found ill myself, and from ill parents, now!
O you, the three roads, and the lonely brake,
The copse, and pass at the divided way,
Which at my hands drank blood that was my own— 1400
My father's—do you keep in memory
What in your sight I did, and how again
I wrought, when I came hither? Wedlock, wedlock,
You gave me being, you raised up seed again
To the same lineage, and exhibited
In one incestuous flesh son—brother—sire,
Bride, wife and mother; and all ghastliest things
Known among men! But O, ill done, ill worded!
In Heaven's name hide me with all speed away, 1410
Or slay me, or send adrift upon some sea
Where you may look on me no longer! Come,

Touch, if you will, a miserable man;
Pray you, fear nothing; for my misery
No mortal but myself can underbear.

I SENATOR

Creon is at hand; he is the man you need,
Who must decide and do; being, after you,
The sole protector left us, for the land.

ŒDIPUS

Ah Heaven, what language shall I hold to him?
What rightful credit will appear in me?
For I have been found wholly in the wrong 1420
In all that passed between us heretofore!

Enter CREON.

CREON

Not as a mocker come I, Œdipus,
Nor to frame taunts at any ill that's past.
But you—even if you reverence no more
Any of mankind—at least so far revere
The royal Sun-god's all-sustaining fire,
Not to parade, thus flagrant, such a sore
As neither earth nor day can tolerate,
Nor dew from Heaven! Take him in instantly!
That kindred only should behold and hear 1430
The griefs of kin, fits best with decency.

ŒDIPUS

In Heaven's name, seeing that you transported me
Beyond all hope, coming, the first of men,
To me the last of men, grant me one boon!
'Tis for your good, not for my own, I say it.

CREON

What is it that you crave so eagerly?

ŒDIPUS

Out of this country cast me with all speed,
Where I may pass without accost of men.

CREON

So had I done, be sure, had I not wished
To learn our duty, first, at the God's mouth.

ŒDIPUS

Surely his oracle was all made plain, 1440
Me, the profane, the parricide, to slay !

CREON

Those were the words; but in our present need
'Tis better to enquire what we must do.

ŒDIPUS

Will ye seek answer for a wretch like me?

CREON

Even you might trust what the God answers, now.

ŒDIPUS

Ay, and I charge thee, and will beg of thee,
Order such burial as thou wilt, thyself,
For her who lies within; seeing it is meet
Thou do so, for thine own. But never more
Be this my native town burdened with me
For living inmate; rather suffer me 1450
To haunt the mountains—where my mountain is,
Cithæron, which my mother and my sire,
Living, appointed for my sepulchre,
That as they meant, my slayers, I may expire.
Howbeit this much I know, neither disease
Nor aught beside can kill me; never else
Had I been rescued from the brink of death,
But for some dire calamity. Ah well,
Let our own fate wag onward as it may;
And for my sons, Creon, take thou no care
Upon thee; they are men, so that they never 1460
Can lack the means to live, where'er they be;
But my two girls, wretched and pitiable,
For whose repast was never board of mine

Ordered apart, without me, but in all
 That I partook they always shared with me,
 Take care of them; and let me, above all else,
 Touch them with hands, and weep away my troubles!
 Pardon, my lord; pardon, illustrious sir;
 If but my hands could feel them, I might seem
 To have them still, as when I still could see. 1470

ANTIGONE and ISMENE are brought in.

—What do I say? In Heaven's name, do I not
 Hear my two darlings, shedding tears, at hand?
 And can it be that Creon, pitying me,
 Sends me my dearest, my two daughters, hither?
 Is it so indeed?

CREON

Yes, it is I who have vouchsafed this boon,
 Knowing of old time the joy you have of them.

OEDIPUS

Why then, good luck go with thee, and Providence
 Be guardian to thee, better than to me,
 In payment for their coming!—Children dear, 1480
 Where are you? Come, come hither to my arms—
 To these brotherly arms—procurers that
 The eyes—that were your sire's—once bright—should see
 Thus! who am shewn, O children, to have been
 Author of you—unseeing—unknowing—in
 Her bed, whence I derived my being! You
 I weep for; for I cannot gaze on you;
 Knowing what is left of bitter in the life
 Which at men's hands you needs must henceforth live.
 For to what gatherings of the citizens
 Will you resort, or to what festivals, 1490
 Whence you will not, in place of holiday,
 Come home in tears? Or when you shall have grown
 To years of marriage, who—ah, who will be
 The man to abide the hazard of disgrace
 Such as must be the bane, both of my sons,

And you as well? For what reproach is lacking?
 Your father slew his father; eared the soil
 Whence his own seedling sprouted; and gat you
 From the same womb, from which himself forth-came!
 So will they shame you; who will wed you then? 1500
 No one, my children; but you needs must wither,
 Barren—unwed. But thou, Menœceus' son,
 Since thou art all the father these have left,
 For we, the two that were their parents, now
 Are both undone, do not thou suffer them
 To wander, vagabond and husband-less,
 Being of thy kin; nor let them fall so low
 As are my fortunes; but have pity on them,
 Seeing them so tender, and so desolate
 Of all friends, but for thee. Give me thy hand, 1510
 Good sir, and promise this.—To you, my girls,
 If you were old enough to understand,
 I should have much to say; but as it is,
 This be your prayer; in some permitted place
 That you may breathe; and have your lot in life
 Happier than his, who did engender you.

CREON

Get thee in; thou hast bewailed thee enough, in reason.

ÆDIPUS

Though it be bitter, I must do it.

CREON

All's good, in good season.

ÆDIPUS

Do you know how to make me?

CREON

Say on, and I shall know.

ÆDIPUS

Banish me from this country.

CREON

That must the God bestow.

ŒDIPUS

But to Gods, above all men, I am a mark for hate.

CREON

And for that same reason you will obtain it straight.

ŒDIPUS

Say you so?

1520

CREON

Yes truly, and I mean what I say.

ŒDIPUS

Lead me hence, then, quickly.

CREON

Go; but let the children stay.

ŒDIPUS

Do not take them from me!

CREON

Think not to have all at thy pleasure;
For what thou didst attain to far outwent thy measure.

CREON, *the Children, etc. retire.* ŒDIPUS *is led in.*

Chorus

All you dwellers in our native Thebes, behold and see
Into what a stormy surge of dire calamity
He who solved the famous riddle, and was first of men,
This man, Œdipus, has fallen! whom what citizen
Did not envy—did not at his fortune stand agaze!

Hence considering and regarding that, our last of days,
We should never reckon man, that is mortal, happy, till
He have passed the bourn of life, suffering no grievous ill.

Excunt omnes.

NOTES

3. The olive-branches, carried in the hand, are said to have been twined with wool, much as our children weave ribbons into their May-day garlands. The effect, however, must have been, as if the whole crowd had been crowned with a common garland, *ἐξεστεμμένοι*. I doubt if Sophocles was thinking of the wool.

11. I follow Professor Kennedy's punctuation and explanation. It seems difficult to get the meaning of "desire" out of *στέργαντες*. In the choric passage, *O. C.* 1094, *στέργω* seems equivalent to "I address with the prayer *στέργον*—be content—*i.e.* *condescend*—to aid"; compare *l.* 518. But here, in dialogue, such a turn of language is surely inadmissible.

18. I do not follow here Wunder's emendation *ἐπ' ἡθέων*, adopted by Dindorf.

44. In saying "the correspondences of their counsels actually exist," I suppose the poet to say no more than this: "the things that actually exist correspond with their counsels." This agrees with Professor Kennedy's interpretation of *συμφοράς* and *ζώσας*, but not with his explanation of the line, as conveying a recommendation to *Œdipus* to consult some other person of experience. The "comparisons" seem to me to be, not those of counsel with counsel, but of counsels with the facts. I adhere to my original rendering with some diffidence, in view of the distinguished authorities who have taken other views of this passage.

67. Compare the note in Shelley's *Essays* on this passage.

181. I venture to take *νηλέα* in its usual meaning. Sophocles is going to call the dead bodies *θανατοφώρα*—death-breeding; surely it is not unnatural that he should prepare us for the horror, by a suitable epithet, "pitiless!"

206. I adopt the reading in Dind. *Poet. Sc. Gr.* *προσταχθέντα*. But the translation would hardly be affected, were I to follow that in his small edition, *προσταθέντα*.

220. I find it hard to understand why this should be translated "I could not *have tracked* it far." The verb is in the imperfect tense.

"If I had a clue," Œdipus argues, "I myself would track it out; not having any clue, I should fail; that is why I come to you." I have read *αὐτός*, not *αὐτό*, as Dindorf.

227. The participle *ὑπεξελών* being in the aorist, I take it to indicate the act done by the culprit, which occasions his fear. I suppose *καὶ* to mean "even if," not "and if"; and I have transposed l. 226, so as to make the connexion clearer. Compare line 233; the expressions "withdrawing covertly the accusation," and "pushing the word away," seem to present the same metaphor in two forms.

294. I read *τρέφει*, with Dindorf.

325. Either at the beginning, or else at the end, of the speech, there must be an omission of the words "I am silent," or something to that effect. I suppose it omitted at the end, with Professor Kennedy.

375. It seems unnecessary to consider as a corrupt reading the striking expression *μῆς πρὸς νυκτός*, and to substitute *μαίας*. The word *τρέφει*, as elsewhere in Sophocles, I suppose here to have no emphatic meaning of nurture, but merely that represented by the English "you are subjected to" or "the denizen of" continuous night.

438. I have here a debt to acknowledge to Professor Kennedy. Also to Professor Jebb in l. 250, and to Sir F. Doyle in l. 535. Doyle's translation, long out of print, is worthy of more consideration than it has ever received.

445. It seems clear that Œdipus retires at the conclusion of his own speech; Tiresias, from his blindness, remaining unaware of the fact. It is impossible to suppose that Œdipus is intended to hear what follows, which would leave him but little to discover, as the play proceeds. An intelligent man could not but set this prophecy beside that of the oracle, detailed in l. 791, and draw the inevitable conclusion.

506. I restore the words omitted by Dindorf. The strophe seems defective.

525. Read *τοῦτος δ' ἐφάνθη*. In my first issue I omitted to take account of the triple repetition of the word *γνώμη*. This has now been corrected.

575. I follow the MSS. reading, *ταῦθ' ἄπερ*, "precisely these things which," and construe *μαθεῖν* "to have learnt" or "to know." Creon argues "You know best; but I claim to be in the position of the man to whom all this is new—of the learner—instead of you." Œdipus replies, carelessly or petulantly, "Learn anything you like!" answering the word rather than the sense, but using the present tense, not the aorist; whereupon Creon rejoins "So I will"; and proceeds to put questions in his turn. This shift in the argument has suggested to commentators an attempt to construe Creon's remonstrance as if it were the setting up of a claim to put the questions, which he after-

wards proceeds to put. I do not think this is possible. It requires us first to change *ταῦθ' ἄπερ* into *ταῦθ' ἄπερ*, "the same things," and to construe this adverbially, "just as," or "in the same way as," which is rather strained; and what is worse, it necessitates the taking of *μαθεῖν* as equivalent to *μανθάνειν*—"I claim to get information" instead of "I claim to be informed"; which is surely impossible. Here also I write with diffidence, in view of the weight of authority against me: but, having formerly guessed at *ταῦθ'*, as the true reading, without knowing it was that of the MSS., I have an interest in standing by it, as against Brunck's alteration.

597. Dindorf's *αἰκάλλονσι* is too tempting for a translator to resist. But it cannot be said to be necessary.

638. My rendering here differs from that usually followed. I doubt if "your trivial grief" is a legitimate translation of *τὸ μηδὲν ἄλγος*, or if *τὸ μηδὲν ἄλγος* be Greek in any sense.

808. I cannot accept Dindorf's alteration of *ἔχου* into *ἔχους*, or his proposal to omit ll. 815, 827.

846. Liddell and Scott's *Lexicon* (*s. v.* *μονόζωνος*) explains *οἰόζωνος* and *μονόζωνος* "girt up alone, *i.e.* journeying alone"; and refers to "Suid., Hesych., etc." and to Ruhnken, *Ep. Cr.* This has been generally followed in England; but a reference to Suidas, Hesychius and the Scholiast, and to Ruhnken on *Hermesian. Eleg.* l. 7, shews that the word covers no reference whatever to a traveller's habit of girding up his loins, and means simply—what Waller preferred to the rest of the world—"the continent of a single girdle." The later meaning "a robber" was probably a reflection from this passage.

852. Bothe's emendation, followed by Dindorf, *σόν* for *τόν*, I reject. It makes nonsense of a forcible passage.

880. The omission of the article with the Greek word for deity does not necessarily imply a sentiment of monotheism. But in the rendering of this chorus it seems admissible to accentuate somewhat the degree to which the poet has forgotten Loxias, and is contemplating the region of supernal deity, or, as he calls it, "Olympus."

920. I see no ground for Wunder's emendation, adopted by Dindorf. The sense requires "a votive offering," which the word in the MSS. will bear: and the idea of "first fruits" is inappropriate.

1055. The reading *τόνδ'* here followed appears necessary; otherwise Œdipus is made to assume the identity as to which he is enquiring.

1056. Another unnecessary alteration here made by Dindorf is rejected by the best editors.

1078. I agree with Professor Jebb's rendering of this line, so important in estimating the two principal characters of the drama. Here, and in ll. 749, 1461, I have further obligations to acknowledge to his prose version.

1089. Dindorf's reading, οὐκ ἔτι τὰν ἐρέων, appears improbable. The oath "by Olympus!" I omit, *metri gratiâ*.

1101. It is surely necessary to get rid of the grandfatherly relation with Loxias, which the MSS. suggest as an alternative for the paternity of other gods. Of two ingenious emendations, Arndt's and Jebb's, no one with a feeling for poetry can hesitate to prefer that of our countryman; and I regret that the difficulty attending any corresponding correction of the strophe has driven him, in a second edition, to abandon it.

1130. I follow the reading adopted by Professor Campbell.

1144. It appears better Greek, and is certainly more effective dialogue, to make two questions, not one, out of this line.

1205. Dindorf follows Hermann in changing the order of words, for metrical reasons; but the sense is not affected thereby.

1220. I have adopted Professor Jebb's justly celebrated emendation.

1222. Strange to say commentators are by no means agreed as to the meaning of the last three words of this ode "I closed my eyes." Do the Chorus say they closed them in sleep, having Œdipus for guardian? Or that they closed them in death, as it were, through despair at his misfortune? In the latter case we must suppose a metaphor within a metaphor—"death" substituted for extreme trouble, and "sleep" for death. But the word *κατεκόλμηση* denotes restful sleep, not, I think, the sleep which can be put metaphorically for death, where death is itself used metaphorically for the extremity of trouble. As it appears to me, moreover, the rendering followed gives a simple, pathetic and congruous ending to the ode: whereas the other is abrupt, prosaic, and subversive of lyrical unity.

1231. I am in this place somewhat indebted to Professor Campbell's version.

1249. An Homeric form occurring in the original sent me to Milton for a turn of phrase which should preserve the epic colouring. In the speeches of messengers these forms were intentionally introduced.

1280, 1. It is impossible to follow Dindorf in proposing to omit these lines. I follow Professor Jebb's correction of the MSS. reading.

1286. I follow Elmsley's correction, *τινι*.

1346, 7. If we adopt the correction in the second line, *ἄν γινώναι*, which makes the Chorus wish, not that they had never known who

Œdipus really was, but that they had never known him at all, it adds force so to render the first line as to express that his skill, which was originally their good fortune, was a misfortune in the end.

1405. I adopt Professor Jebb's reading, τ' αὐτοῦ.

1415. Compare Shakspeare, *King J.* Act III. Sc. 1.

—leave those woes alone, which I alone
Am bound to underbear.

This coincidence can hardly be casual.

1446. The reading which makes this an entreaty—προστρέψομαι—appears to me the better.

1453. I follow the MSS. ζῶντε—not as Dindorf: so also in 1460, προσθῆ.

1495. I have followed the emendation γόνουσι.

1526. Some correction here is necessary; but whatever the reading, I think this must be the meaning intended.

I take this opportunity of acknowledging with gratification the favourable comments, public and private, which were elicited by my experimental publication of this play. I am especially indebted, for criticism and encouragement, to the kindness of the late Mr Matthew Arnold, and of Mr James Rhoades; to the Rev. J. B. Mayor, author of *Chapters on English Metre*, for remarks on the versification; and to Mr E. D. A. Morshead, for a minute examination of the renderings, which appeared in the *Classical Review*.

TRACHINIAE

TRACHINIAE

PERSONS REPRESENTED

DEIANIRA, daughter of *Æneus* the chieftain of *Pleuron* in *Ætolia*, and wife to *Heracles*.

A bondswoman attending on Deianira.

HYLLUS, eldest son of *Heracles* by *Deianira*.

A messenger, a Melian of Trachis.

LICHAS, a herald in attendance on *Heracles*.

IOLE, daughter of *Eurytus* king of *Æchalia*, captive-wife to *Heracles*.

Nurse to Deianira.

An old man attending on Heracles.

HERACLES.

The CHORUS is composed of ladies of Trachis, friends of Deianira.

Æchalian women, captives to Heracles.

Attendants on Heracles.

TRACHINIAE

Scene, before the house of Heracles, at Trachis.

Enter DEIANIRA and Attendant.

DEIANIRA

'Tis an old well-known proverb of mankind,
"You cannot tell men's fortunes till they die,
In any case, if they be good or bad";
But I, before I to the grave decline,
Know that unfortunate and hard are mine:
Who while still dwelling at Pleuron, in the house
Of my sire Æneus, had the sorest scare
About my bridal of all womankind
Throughout Ætolia. For a river-god
Was suitor to me—Achelous I mean;
Who in three shapes asked me at my father's hands, 10
Courting me now in a bull's form confest,
Now as a particoloured coiling snake,
Now with an ox-front on a trunk of man,
While out of thickets of his tangled beard
Rills of spring-water oozed continually.
On such a suitor's pleasure I, poor maid,
Attending, ever prayed that I might die
Ere I approached his bed. Howbeit at last
To my relief the illustrious offspring came
Of Zeus and of Alcmena; who with him
Engaging in the arbitrament of fight
Saved me. What was the fashion of the fray
I cannot tell; I do not know it; he
Who sat and saw it unalarmed might say.

For I sat still, out of my wits with fear
Lest, after all, beauty should work me bale ;
But Zeus, the lord of battles, ended it
Prosperously—if indeed prosperously.
For taken to the bed of Heracles,
Ever I have within me fear on fear,
Foreboding ill for him. For with each night
A labour comes and goes ; each night, in turn,
Hands on the torch of labour. We had children, 30
Whom he, like husbandman that has in hand
An outlying farm, once, and but once, beheld,
In seedtime or in harvest. Such a lot
Still would despatch my husband out and home
In service to some master. But of late,
After he rose superior o'er these toils,
Now, most of all, have I been full of terror.
For since he smote the might of Iphitus,
We dwell in Trachis here, far from our home,
In a friend's house ; and whither he has gone 40
No man can tell ; but gone he is, on me
Casting a burden of bitter pangs for him.
And I dare say that he is in some trouble ;
For no brief space, but full ten months already,
And five to that, he bides, and sends no tidings.
Ay, and it is some formidable trouble ;
Witness the tablet that he left with me
In parting ; which I often pray to heaven
He did not give me to my injury.

ATTENDANT

Queen Deianira, many a time ere now
Did I behold thee weeping, bathed in tears, 50
Mourning that Heracles was gone from thee.
But now, if it be right for a slave's thoughts
To inform the free, this much even I may say ;
How is it that being rich in sons, so tall,
Thou sendest none to seek for Heracles,
And chiefly Hyllus, as were natural,
If he had any care to hear the news

Of his sire's welfare? And in happy time
Here is himself, bounding towards us home;
Wherefore, if aught I say seems seasonable,
He, and my words as well, are at your service. 60

Enter HYLLUS.

DEIANIRA

O child, my son, even from the lowly born
Words may fall well. This is a bond-woman,
But she has spoken a frank word.

HYLLUS

How so?

Tell me, my mother, if I may be told.

DEIANIRA

That now your sire has been so long from home,
Not to know where he is reflects on you.

HYLLUS

But I do know, if one may trust report.

DEIANIRA

And where, my son, hear you that he is stayed?

HYLLUS

This season past, they say, all the year long
He wrought in service to a Lydian dame. 70

DEIANIRA

If he brooked that, one might hear anything.

HYLLUS

He is quit of it, however, as they tell me.

DEIANIRA

Where, dead or living, is he rumoured now?

HYLLUS

They say he is assailing, in Eubœa,
Or means to assail, the city of Eurytus.

DEIANIRA

Child, do you know he left behind with me
Sure oracles concerning that same land?

HYLLUS

In what strain, mother? I never heard of it.

DEIANIRA

That he is bound to either end his days,
Or, this one feat performed, thereafterward 80
Lead his whole future life in happiness.
Child! when his fortune hangs in such suspense,
Will you not run to help? Seeing we are saved
In his life's safety, or are lost with him.

HYLLUS

Yes mother, I will go. If I had heard
The tenor of these oracles, long since
Had I been with him; now I know of them,
I will leave nought undone, to ascertain
The whole truth of the matter. As things are,
His wonted fortune bids us not to fear 90
Or quake too much beforehand, for my sire.

DEIANIRA

Speed then, my son. It is worth while to know
Things have gone well, however late, with us.

Exit HYLLUS.*Enter Ladies of Trachis, as Chorus.**Chorus*

I. 1.

O Thou whom the Shadow of Night being slain
Brings forth, then lays to repose again,
Sun, flaming Sun, I implore of thee
The thing I seek to reveal to me,
With bright flash blazing, say where—O where
Is the dwelling-place of Alcmena's heir?

Whether in sea-channels hiding,

100

Or on either coast abiding,

Thou all-transcendent Eye of Heaven, declare!

I. 2.

For 'tis with a yearning of heart I have heard
How she, my queen, like a wailing bird,
(A bride much fought for—an envied prize)
Never sinks to the slumber of tearless eyes,
But bears in her bosom a mindful fear
For the wandering toils of her husband dear ;
 On her widowed bed reclining,
 Wistfully at all times pining,
In the terror of misfortune drawing near. 110

II. 1.

For as waves are seen thronging and flowing
Amid the wide sea,
When the south wind or north wind is blowing
Unwearyingly,
Such huge Cretan ocean of troubles
On troubles upbears
The offspring of Cadmus, and doubles
His portion of cares.
But him some Power evermore stands near to save
In scathlessness, from the halls of the yawning grave. 120

II. 2.

And therefore it is that I chide thee ;
Things pleasant, say I,
May yet be in store to betide thee,
Howe'er thou deny.
I say, the good hope that remaineth
Thou need'st not dispel,
For Zeus, who omnipotent reigneth,
Gives sorrows as well.
So ever we move in a circle of joy and care, 130
That whirl like the whirling ways of the Arctic Bear.

For neither shadowy night nor fated sorrow
Nor wealth abides, but suddenly it is gone ;
Joy finds us, and bereavement thereupon
Comes, on the morrow.
Wherefore I bid thee also, O my queen,
Remember this, and hope ; for who hath seen
Zeus of his own
So unregardful grown? 140

DEIANIRA

You come having been told, as I suppose,
Of my distress ; but you are ignorant—
And may you never by experience learn—
What canker gnaws my heart. For Girlhood feeds
In the same place, in pastures such as these ;
And not the heat of Heaven, or the rain,
Or any blast of tempests, troubles it ;
But in delights it rears a painless life,
Up to the point where we obtain the name
Of wife instead of maiden, and receive
Share, in the night-time, of solitudes,
Portioned with fears, either for spouse or child. 150
Thus may each see, regarding her own case,
Under what burdens I am labouring.
Troubles indeed right many have I deplored ;
But one such as I never felt before,
Which I will now disclose. For when our lord
Heracles sped from home on his last journey,
He left indoors an ancient tablet, graven
With characters, which never theretofore
At any time, starting for fight on fight,
Would he declare to me ; rather, he would march
As to achievement, not as to his death ; 160
While now, as though his life were done, he told me
What of his goods I was to take for dower,
Told me what portion of his heritage
He would assign his children, share by share,
Setting a date beforehand, in such sort
As, when he had been absent from the land
Full fifteen months, either at that same hour
He must needs die, or, overpassing it,
Live ever afterwards in happiness.
So, he declared, it was decreed of Heaven
The toils of Heracles should have an end ; 170
Even as Dodona's ancient oak, said he,
By the twin doves had spoken. And of this
The true fulfilment, as it was to be,

Points to this present hour. Wherefore, dear friends,
As I sleep quietly I start up for fear,
Dreading that I may have to linger on,
The widow of the foremost man of men.

I LADY

Keep to good words; for I perceive a man
Crowned with a wreath, coming to give us joy.

Enter a MESSENGER.

MESSENGER

Queen Deianira, first of messengers 180
I will release you from expectancy.
For be assured, Heracles is alive,
And is victorious, and is bringing home
Trophies from fight to the land's deities.

DEIANIRA

What is it that you say, old man?

MESSENGER

That soon
The husband whom you long for will arrive
Here, at your doors, in triumph.

DEIANIRA

And from whom,
Townsmen or stranger, have you this to say?

MESSENGER

Lichas the herald in the pasture-meadow
Is shouting it to crowds; hearing whose tale
I rushed away, to bring you the first news, 190
And be rewarded, and win grace with you.

DEIANIRA

If he speeds well, why is himself not here?

MESSENGER

Madam, he is not quite at liberty.
Why, the whole Melian people in a ring

Stand by and question him ; he cannot stir ;
 For every one, wishing to ascertain
 His heart's desire, will not relinquish it
 Before he hears his fill ; so Lichas tarries
 Unwillingly, among willing company ;
 But you will see him in an instant, plainly.

DEIANIRA

Zeus, thou that holdest Cæta's mead unmown, 200
 At last, though late, thou hast vouchsafed us joy.
 Lift up your voices, women—you indoors
 And you without the gates ! So gather we
 The glory of the unexpected orb
 Of this report, rising before me now !

Chorus

Loud let the household shout
 In the shrill treble of maidens, brides to be !
 —Let the hearth ring out,
 And clamour of men join in the harmony,
 Praising Apollo's name, who bears the quiver,
 Strong to deliver !
 Her, withal, ye virgins praise— 210
 Pæan—your pæan raise
 To the twin sister—her,
 The Ortygian Artemis, the deerslayer,
 Fire-girt on either hand,
 And to the Nymphs, her band !
 —See, I mount, I soar beyond control ;
 Nor will I spurn the flute—O monarch of my soul !
 Lo, I feel the ivy-frenzy, whirling me along—
 Evøe ! Evøe ! after the Bacchic throng ! 220
 Hail Pæan, Pæan hail !
 —Dear lady, see,
 It is all here for thee
 Face to face to witness, without veil.

Enter LICHAS, with IOLE and Cæchalian Captives.

DEIANIRA

I see it, dear ladies ; my eyes' vigilance
 Missed not the vision of this company ;

And Herald, I bid thee welcome, though full late
Arrived, if thou bring'st welcome news with thee.

LICHAS

Well am I come, and am well greeted, lady,
As I deserve; good fortune cannot fail 230
To win a hearty welcome.

DEIANIRA

Most sweet sir,
First answer my first craving; is it true
I shall receive back Heracles alive?

LICHAS

I left him, certainly, alive and strong,
And flourishing, and sick of no disease.

DEIANIRA

Where? In his own land, or in Asia? Tell me.

LICHAS

There is a promontory in Eubœa,
Where to Cenæan Zeus he consecrates
Altars, and tribute of meat-offerings.

DEIANIRA

According to some vow or oracle?

LICHAS

Vows, made when he despoiled and overthrew 240
The country of these women—whom you see.

DEIANIRA

And they—whence and who are they, in Heaven's name?
Poor things—if I can judge of miseries!

LICHAS

These, when he sacked the city of Eurytus,
He chose for the Gods' portion, and his own.

DEIANIRA

Was it against that city he was gone
The unmeasured space of those uncounted days?

LICHAS

Not so ; most of the time he was detained
Among the Lydians ; by his own account
Not a free man, but sold to slavery. 250
Shame at the word, lady, there needs not be,
When Zeus is known to have effected it.
Well, sold to Omphale, the native queen,
He served her, as he says, for a full year.
And under this reproach he was so nettled,
That with an oath he bound himself, and vowed
The time should come he would enslave the man—
Wife, child and all—who caused him this annoy :
Nor did he vow in vain ; but gathering,
When he was cleansed, an army of allies,
He marched against the city of Eurytus ;
For Eurytus, he sware, and he alone, 260
Was accessory to this injury ;
Who, when he came into his house a guest,
Being of old familiar there, stormed at him
With loud abuse and deep malevolence
Of spirit—saying that although he bore
Arrows inevitable, he was surpassed
By sons of his, in trial of the bow ;
And roared, that being a slave, from a free man
He should take chastisement ; and when in wine
Once, at a feast, he cast him out of doors.
Angered at this, when Iphitus in turn 270
Came to the slope of Tiryns, to track out
Some horses that were ranging, as he stood
Gazing at something, with his wits afield,
He hurled him from the tower-like mountain-top.
And for that deed the King, being incensed,
Zeus, the Olympian father of us all,
Sent him forth to be sold ; intolerant
For that him only of mankind by craft
He slew ; for had he fought him openly,
Zeus surely would have pardoned that he wrought
By violence, with right upon his side ;

For insolence is loathed, even in Heaven. 280
 Well, they, with tongues of overweening spite,
 Now are themselves all inmates of the grave,
 Their city enslaved; while these whom you survey,
 Once happy, but now fallen on joyless days,
 Are journeying toward your presence. Thus your lord
 Charged me, and I, being his liege-man, perform.
 As for himself, when to his father, Zeus,
 He has discharged solemn thank-offerings
 For the town's fall, you may expect him here.
 That is the best good news of my long story. 290

I LADY

Mistress, now is your happiness assured,
 Half being in hand, and half reported you.

DEIANIRA

How can I help rejoicing heartily
 At hearing this good fortune of my lord?
 It cannot be that it should not be so;
 Yet is it natural that the vigilant
 Should tremble for one prosperous, lest he fall.
 For a strange pity is come upon me, friends,
 Seeing these poor creatures, houseless, fatherless,
 Wanderers here upon a foreign soil, 300
 Who were before, it may be, gently born,
 But are now leading lives of slavery.
 Averting Zeus! Ne'er let me see thee thus
 Making assault upon my progeny!
 Or, if thou must, spare us till I am dead!
 Such are my terrors, in beholding them.
 —Who and what are you, miserable girl?
 Maiden, or childing mother? You appear
 Skill-less of all such matters, outwardly;
 Some lady, too. Lichas, who is the stranger? 310
 Who was her mother? Who her father? Say;
 Since her I pity, most of all I see,
 For that she only has the wit to feel.

LICHAS

What do I know? Why should you ask me? A slip
Of those from thence, not of the lowest, it may be.

DEIANIRA

What, of their kings? Offspring of Eurytus?

LICHAS

I do not know. I did not question her
At length.

DEIANIRA

Nor did you ever get her name
From any of her fellow-travellers?

LICHAS

Nay,

I did my work in silence.

DEIANIRA

Then, poor maid,
Tell us yourself; for not to know your name
Is melancholy!

320

LICHAS

If she at all wag tongue,
It will be something different from before;
For no word has she uttered, less or more;
But she is always shedding tears, in travail
Of heavy woe, poor creature, since she left
Her storm-swept land. This state of things is bad
For her own self; but it is pardonable.

DEIANIRA

Well, let her be; and let her pass indoors
In peace, as she likes best, and not be given
Fresh pain by me, more than her present troubles;
For what she suffers is sufficient. Now
Go we all in; that you may speed your errand,
And I provide for what is wanted there.

330

Exeunt LICHAS, IOLE and Captives.

MESSENGER

First, for an instant tarry where you are,
That you may learn, apart from them, what persons
You are conducting in; and may perceive
Things you should know, nothing of which was told you.
Of the whole business I am cognizant.

DEIANIRA

What is it? Why do you stop me as I go?

MESSENGER

Stand still and hear; for not in vain you heard 340
My former tale; nor will you this, I fancy.

DEIANIRA

What, shall we call the others back again,
Or would you tell it to these maids and me?

MESSENGER

To you and these, freely; but let them be.

DEIANIRA

Well, they are gone. Now let the tale be told.

MESSENGER

Lichas says nothing, of all he spake just now,
Straightforwardly; but either is a knave
Now, or before was no true messenger.

DEIANIRA

What say you? Tell me plainly your whole mind;
For what you have announced is dark to me. 350

MESSENGER

I heard this man, with many a witness by,
Say that our master conquered Eurytus
And the high ramparts of Œchalia's town,
For this girl's sake; and that Love only of Gods
Allured him to the combat; not his toil
Wrought with the Lydians, or with Omphale,

Nor fate of Iphitus hurled headlong; Love—
 Which he slurs over, and unsays it now.
 But when he could not work upon her sire
 To give the maid to be his paramour, 360
 Dressing up some small grievance for a cause,
 He leads an army against her country, where
 This Eurytus, Lichas declared, was monarch,
 And slays the king her father, and sacks the town.
 And now, you see, he is arrived, and sends her
 To this house, lady; not unthinkingly,
 Nor as a slave; never imagine it!
 That were unlikely, fervid with desire
 As he has been. Therefore I thought it good
 To you, my mistress, to reveal the whole
 Of what I came to know from this man's mouth. 370
 Many Trachinians, in mid market-place,
 Heard the whole story, equally with me,
 And can convict him. If my words give pain
 I am sorry, but I have spoken what is truth.

DEIANIRA

O me unhappy! What has come to me?
 What bane have I received under my roof
 From me kept secret! O me miserable!
 And was she nameless, as he sware who brought her?

MESSENGER

Nay but in birth, as in her face, a prize!
 Eurytus was her father; she was named 380
 Iole—of whose descent the fellow there
 Let no word fall—"asking no questions," quoth he!

I LADY

Down with ill doers! those at least, who do
 Evil in secret which beseems them not!

DEIANIRA

Women, what must I do? How by the tale
 Which is now told me am I thunderstricken!

I LADY

Why go and ask the man; for if you choose
To press for answers, he will soon speak plain.

DEIANIRA

Well, so I will. You do not say amiss.

I LADY

And shall we stay? Or what are we to do? 390

DEIANIRA

Stay; for, without my sending, here he comes
Of his own motion from the house.

Enter LICHAS.

LICHAS

Say, lady,

What message must I take to Heracles?

I am going, as you see.

DEIANIRA

How speedily

You are starting—after taking long to come—
Before we can renew our colloquy!

LICHAS

If you would ask some question, here I am.

DEIANIRA

Ah, do you tell the truth in honesty?

LICHAS

Great Zeus be witness! yes, of what I know.

DEIANIRA

Who is the woman, pray, whom you brought hither? 400

LICHAS

She's an Eubœan; her birth I cannot tell.

MESSENGER

Fellow, look here; to whom do you suppose
You speak?

LICHAS

What business is it of yours to ask me?

MESSENGER

Answer my question frankly, if you know how.

LICHAS

To the daughter of CENEUS, wife of Heracles,
The potent Deianira—if my eyes
Do not deceive me—and my mistress.

MESSENGER

I wanted—to hear that from you. That
You say
This is your mistress?

LICHAS

So she is.

MESSENGER

What then? What then?
What penalty do you expect to pay, 410
If you are found out playing false to her?

LICHAS

How false? What juggle are you planning?

MESSENGER

None.
But, in good earnest, you are acting one!

LICHAS

I am going. I was foolish all along
To listen to you.

MESSENGER

Not before you answer
Just one short question.

LICHAS

Ask it, if you please.

You are loquacious.

MESSENGER

The girl-prize, whom you
Conducted hither—I suppose you know her?

LICHAS

I do. But wherefore ask me?

MESSENGER

Did not you
Say this your charge, whom you ignore by sight,
Was Iole, offspring of Eurytus?

420

LICHAS

To whom? Who will attest you, from what quarter,
That he was present, and heard this from me?

MESSENGER

Many of the people. In mid market-place
Of the Trachinians, plenty heard you say it.

LICHAS

O ay,
I said I heard so. There's a difference
'Twixt saying one's guess, and speaking rigidly.

MESSENGER

Your guess, indeed! Did you not say, and swear it,
You brought her as a wife for Heracles?

LICHAS

I bring a wife! For Heaven's sake, my dear lady,
Tell me his name; who is this stranger?

430

MESSENGER

One

Present, who heard you say that a whole city
Was subjugated for the love of her;
And that desire for her, notoriously,
And not the Lydian princess, ruined it.

LICHAS

My mistress—let the man stand back. To prate
With a man crazy is to play the fool.

DEIANIRA

Now in Jove's name, who sends his lightnings down
On Ceta's wooded height, palter not with me!
For you will say your say to no bad wife,
Or unfamiliar with the ways of men,
How that their nature is to take delight
Not in the same things always. With Desire 440
Whoever, like a boxer, fist to fist
Rises in conflict, is not well advised;
For it sways even deities at will,
Ay and myself; and why not others too
Who are like me? so that, if I find fault
With my own spouse, caught by this malady,
Or with this woman, who shares with him in that
Which is no scandal, and no harm to me,
I must be mad. The case is otherwise.
Now if by his instruction you speak falsely,
You are a scholar in no worthy school; 450
While if you are yourself your tutor here,
You will be found injurious, when you wish
To be of service. Tell me all the truth.
For a free man to earn the name of liar
Is a misfortune that dishonours him.
Nor can it be that you will not be known;
For many are they you have talked with, who will tell me.
And if you are frightened, you do ill to quail;
For it would vex me not to be informed,
But where's the harm of knowing? Are there not wives—
Others besides—full many—whom Heracles 460
Took, to himself—and never one of them
Bore evil language or reproach from me?
No more shall she; not though he melt quite through
With his affection; since I pitied her
As I surveyed her, truly, most of all;

For that her beauty was her bane, and she,
Poor thing, brought down, without intending it,
On her own land spoiling and slavery.
Well, let all this go floating down the gale!
Only I charge you—unto others be
Injurious—but at all times true to me.

I LADY

Hearken ; she counsels fairly. By and by 470
You will approve her, and find grace with me.

LICHAS

O mistress dear, now I discern in you
A human creature—human, and not stubborn,
The whole truth will I tell you, and hide it not.
For so it is, even as this man reports ;
It was for her that the fell passion passed
Through Heracles of late ; and for her sake
Her death-strewn native land, Œchalia,
Was desolated by the spear. All this—
For I must say, also, what makes for him—
He never bade conceal—never denied ; 480
But I myself, my mistress, in alarm
Lest I should wound your bosom with the news,
Was guilty there, if guilt you reckon it.
Now that you know the whole, both for his sake
And yours no less, be patient with the woman,
And be determined firmly to abide
By all that you declared concerning her ;
Since he, the vanquisher of all beside,
Is wholly mastered by his love for her.

DEIANIRA

Yes. That is my conclusion, so to act. 490
Harm from without I do not mean to incur,
Fighting at odds with Heaven. Now let us go
Into the house ; that you may bear from me
Letters, with words ; and, gift for gift, whatever
Is fitting to bestow, may take that also.

Hither you came with a fair company,
And pity it were you should go empty hence.

Exeunt DEIANIRA, *attendant*, LICHAS, and *Messenger*.

Chorus

1.

Great is the might wherewith ever the triumphs of Cypris are won.
The loves of the Gods I pass over, and how she beguiled Cronos' son,
Or Poseidon, the shaker of Earth, or Hades, the indweller of night,
I tell not; I sing what strong-limbed pair went down to the fight—
Fight for the prize of a nuptial, to win this woman to wife,
And battled with buffet on buffet, and wrestled out strife upon strife.

2.

The first was shaped like a high-horned four-legged bull to see,
Achelous, the strong River, from far Cœniadæ;
And the son of Jove from Theba, the city of Bacchus, came, 510
With bended bow, and with brandished club, and with spears at aim;
And fired by desire they hurtled together, straight to the fray;
And Cypris sat by, with her wand held high, sole queen of the day.

There was noise of fists crashing and of bulls' horns clashing,
And a sound of the twanging of bows;
There were limbs twining in medley, there were forehead-thrusts deadly,
And groans that from both sides rose. 520

But the tender fair
On far-seen upland brows
Sat, expecting there
Who should be her spouse;
As a mother I say what I am saying;
But the visage of the bride
For whom men contend
Wistfully abides the end;
Then, like a heifer straying,
Sudden is parted from her mother's side. 530

Enter DEIANIRA.

DEIANIRA

Friends, while our guest is parleying in the house
With the girl-captives, on the point to go,
I am come forth to you in private, first

Wishing to tell you my devices, next
To be condoled with for my injuries.
For I have taken into my house a maid—
And yet, methinks, a maid no more, but married—
Even as a shipman takes a load on board,
A losing bargain for my heart! And now
We two abide under one covering
To be embraced. This reward Heracles— 540
Whom I did hold constant and excellent—
Sent, in return for my long house-tending.
And him I cannot be indignant with,
Often afflicted with this malady ;
But to keep house with her, and to go shares
In the same marriage-bond—what wife could do it?
For I see bloom on her side coming on,
And on mine fading ; and of such the sight
Will pick the flower, and eschew the rest.
This, then, is what I fear ; that Heracles 550
Will be called spouse to me, but be her mate,
The younger woman. Still it is not well
A wife who has discretion, as I said,
Should become wroth ; rather in what way, friends,
My anguish does admit of remedy,
Lo, I will tell you. I have long possessed
A keepsake of a monster of old time,
Put by in a brass vessel, which I gathered,
When yet a girl, out of the mortal wounds
Of the shag-bosomed Nessus, as he died ;
Who used to carry men across the ford
Of the Evenus, a deep stream, for hire, 560
With his mere hands, plying without oar or sail.
He, when I first with Heracles a bride
Went, at my sire's disposing, carrying me
Upon his back, when he was in mid-passage,
Touched me with wanton hands. And I cried out ;
And straight the son of Jove turned, and his hands
Launched a winged shaft ; and it whizzed through the breast,
Into his lungs. And as the brute expired,
He spake these words ; “ Child of old Ceneus,

If you will hear, you shall have this much profit, 570
 Seeing that you were my last of passengers,
 Out of my ferry; for if you collect
 The gore that stiffens round my deadly wound,
 Just where the black envenomed shafts were dipped
 In blood of the Lernæan water-snake,
 A medicine for the heart of Heracles
 It shall be to you; so that he shall love
 No woman whom he looks on, more than you."
 Mindful of this, my friends—for since his death
 It has been carefully locked up at home—
 I dipped this tunic, and threw in the whole 580
 Of what he told me just before he died.
 This has been done. Now never may I know—
 Never be taught—evil experiments;
 Nay, those who try them I detest; but if
 By philtres I may circumvent this girl,
 And by enchantments upon Heracles—
 Why, means have been supplied; unless I seem
 Busied in vain; if so, I will not do it.

I LADY

If there is any surety about things
 Yet in the doing, you appear to us
 To have resolved not ill.

DEIANIRA

Thus much there is;
 The likelihood is there; but in the trial 590
 I never yet engaged.

I LADY

Well, one must learn
 By doing the thing; for though you think you know it
 You have no certainty, until you try.

DEIANIRA

Well, we shall know directly; for I see
 Lichas already at the door; and quickly
 He will be here. Only let me, by you,

Be covered well ; for never in the dark
Need you be brought to shame, though you are doing
What is unseemly.

Enter LICHAS.

LICHAS

What am I to do,
Daughter of Æneus? Tell me ; for we are
Already late, through our long tarrying.

DEIANIRA

Why indeed, Lichas, to that very end 600
Have I been busy, while you stayed to talk
To the girl-guests within ; that you should bear
This fine-woven garment to that spouse of mine,
A present from my hand. And when you give it,
Say that no mortal is to put it on
Before himself ; and that no sunlight beam,
Or holy fane, or flame from altar-hearth
Is to behold it, till he shall stand up
Radiant, and shew himself, before high Heaven,
Conspicuous, on a day of sacrifice.
For so I vowed, if ever I should see him 610
Come safely home, or hear of it, to deck him
All duly with this tunic, and display him
As a new votary, in new robes, to Heaven.
And there shall be a seal on your dispatch,
Which he will see distinctly corresponds
With the impression of my signet-ring.
Now go ; and seek, first, to observe the rule,
Not to desire, being a mere messenger,
To exceed your bounds ; next, that his grace and mine
May both together be displayed towards you.

LICHAS

If this Hermetic courier-craft of mine 620
Is trusty, you shall never find me fail
To carry and present your casket safe,
Adding exactly what you bid me say.

DEIANIRA

Now, if you please, set forth; for you know well
All that is going on within the house.

LICHAS

I know and will report all has gone well.

DEIANIRA

Ay, and about the stranger—you have seen
What kind reception I bestowed on her?

LICHAS

Such as to strike delight into my bosom!

DEIANIRA

What more, then, should you tell him? For I dread 630
Your saying, too early, how I long for him,
Before I know whether he longs for me.

Exit LICHAS; DEIANIRA retires.

Chorus

I. 1.

O ye who dwell where the warm springs well
From the cliffs where navies ride,
Who by Cæta's peaks or the mid-land creeks
Of Melia's gulf abide,
Or the shores, deep-bayed, of Her, the Maid
With distaff all of gold,
Where stand the Gates, where the Grecian States
Their solemn councils hold,

I. 2.

The clarion sweet no note unmeet
Shall raise among you soon,
But such as suits with the sound of lutes
Played to a sacred tune,
Now Alcmena's son, the Jove-born one,
Comes, bringing in his train
The glorious spoils of all his toils
To his own home again:

640

II. 1.

Whom we waited for and thought, a full twelve-month, knowing nought.

“He is far from his land, upon the wave:”

She the while, his loving mate, mourning her unhappy fate, 650

Weeping ever, and declining towards her grave:

Till, stung to life, Eros at last

Gives her release, but now, from days of labours past.

II. 2.

Let him come! let him come! Never till he reach his home

Let the chariot of his oars stand still!

From the island-altar where, as 'tis said, he is at prayer,

Let him speed, with all lover-like good will, 660

As by the Centaur's oracle,

Anointed with the balsam of the suasive spell.

DEIANIRA *advancing*

O women, how I tremble lest, in all

I have been doing, I should have gone too far!

I LADY

What is it, Deianira, Ceneus' child?

DEIANIRA

I do not know. But I am sick at heart,

For fear I should be found, soon, to have done,

Quite contrary to my fair hope, great harm!

I LADY

Not something in your gift to Heracles?

DEIANIRA

Yes, yes! So that I never shall approve,

In any, a readiness to undertake

A work of which the issue is not plain! 670

I LADY

Tell me what scares you—if it may be told.

DEIANIRA

A thing has happened such as, if I tell it,
O women, you will think a miracle
Beyond belief to hear. The fleece, you know,
Wherewith I was anointing even now
The vestment-garment, of a sheep's white wool,
'Tis gone! by nothing in the house devoured,
But wasting, eaten up of its own self,
And shrivelling on the pavement. I will tell you
At greater length, that you may know the whole,
How it befell. Of all the Centaur-beast 680
Of yore enjoined me, when he felt the smart
Of the sharp-pointed arrow in his side,
I let slip nothing, but remembered it,
Like writing on brass leaves, indelibly;
And this was what he told me, and so I wrought;
I was to keep this drug always put by,
Away from fire, untouched by the warm beam,
Till, newly spread, I could make use of it.
And so I did; but now 'twas time to use it,
I tore the fluff from a sheep's fleece of mine,
And with a wool-tuft smeared my gift, at home, 690
Indoors, in secret; folded it, and put it
Inside a coffer, safe, out of the sun,
As you perceived. But going indoors just now
I saw a sight quite indescribable—
Incomprehensible! For as it happened,
I had flung the lock, with which I did the spreading,
Out in the sunlight, into its full blaze.
And as it became warmer it dissolved,
And has all shrivelled up upon the ground,
In form most to be likened to the look
Which sawdust takes, when they cut wood; so lies it, 700
All fallen away. And from the ground whereon
It lay before there spring up clots of foam,
As of rich liquor spilt upon the earth
From vines of Bacchus, when the fruit turns blue.
So that I know not where to turn, for trouble;

But see that I have done a perilous deed.
 For from what possible motive—on what score
 Could the brute, dying, have shewn good will to me,
 For whose cause he was dying? It cannot be!
 But, seeking to destroy the man that smote him,
 He was beguiling me! Whereof too late 710
 I get the knowledge, when it helps no more;
 For I—I only, except I be deceived—
 Wretch! in my mind, shall be his murderess!
 For I know well, the shaft that made the wound
 Lamed Chiron, though immortal; and it kills
 Wild beasts of every kind, if it but graze them;
 And this black gory venom, passing on
 From the death-wounds of one victim, how can it
 Not slay him too? at least, I fancy so.
 Yet am I fixed, if Heracles miscarries,
 In the same moment I will die with him; 720
 For life ill-famed is unendurable
 To one who claims to have been born in honour.

I LADY

Fear about perilous deeds is necessary.
 Still, Hope must not be sentenced, ere her time.

DEIANIRA

There is not, in designs which are not honest,
 Even hope, to vouch for any spark of cheer.

I LADY

But in their case who trip not wilfully
 Anger is mild; and you should find it so.

DEIANIRA

Such words no sharer in the offence would use,
 But one who has no heaviness within. 730

I LADY

Silence from further talk of this were fitting,
 Unless you have a word to tell your son,
 Who went to seek his sire; for he is here.

Enter HYLLUS.

HYLLUS

Mother, I would one of three things were true
About you ; that you should have ceased to live,
Or if you lived, should have been known for mother
Of some one else, or should have somewhere gained
A better spirit than is in you now.

DEIANIRA

O son, what is it that you hate in me?

HYLLUS

I tell you, on this same day you have destroyed
Your husband—him, I say, who is my sire. 740

DEIANIRA

Oh !

What is the word you uttered, O my child?

HYLLUS

One 'tis impossible should come untrue.
For who can make not done, what was seen doing?

DEIANIRA

How say you, boy? Whence did you learn to say
That I have wrought a deed so execrable?

HYLLUS

It is myself have witnessed, with my eyes,
Not from report, my father's heavy chance.

DEIANIRA

Where did you meet him and attend on him?

HYLLUS

If you must know, I must relate the whole.
As he was marching, after having taken 750
Eurytus' famous city, bringing off
Trophies and first fruits of his victory,
There is a promontory in Eubœa,
Cape Ceneum, washed upon both sides by sea,

Where he was marking, for his father, Zeus,
Altars and precincts of a sacred grove,
When I first viewed him, glad of my desire.
And just as he was going to begin
A course of sacrifices, from his home
Came Lichas, his own herald, bringing him
Your gift, the deadly gown; which he put on,
As you had given command; then of his cattle 760
Slew twelve tall bulls, the firstlings of the spoil;
(But he was offering, flocks and herds in all,
A hundred head together.) And at first,
Proud of the beauty and the state of it,
In a blithe mood, poor soul, he began praying;
But when above the sacred mysteries
Flame, fed with blood, and rich with resinous fuel
Was kindling, out upon his flesh there came
Sweat, and the tunic clung, close to his sides,
As moulded by an artist, limb by limb;
Then came a racking aching of his bones; 770
Next, as the venom of the abhorred snake
Took to its murderous banquet, suddenly
He shouted to the unhappy Lichas—him
Who for your fault was not at all to blame—
What machinations made him bring that gown?
But he, unhappy, nothing knowing, said
It was your gift alone, just as you sent it.
When he heard that, while a heart-piercing spasm
Seized on his lungs, he caught him by the foot,
Close to the ancle-joint, and hurled him prone
Against a rock washed on both sides by sea; 780
And smashed the scull, and from the hair, with blood,
Dashed the brains out. Then the whole people cried
Horrorstruck, seeing him in agony,
And him stone-dead; and there was no man dared
To go and face him; for he was convulsed,
Now falling down, now rearing himself up,
Crying and moaning, while the rocks around,
Both Locrian headlands and Eubœan capes,
Sounded aloud. But when his vigour failed,

What with oft throwing himself upon the ground,
 What with his cries and groanings, hapless one, 790
 Cursing the ill-sorted bed, where by your side—
 O wretch—he lay, and the alliance made
 With CENEUS, for the canker to his life
 Which he had found it, then, casting a glance
 Aside, out of the smoke that compassed him,
 Me he beheld among a numerous host
 Weeping, and looked toward me, and called my name ;
 “Come here, boy ; do not shun my misery ;
 Not even if you had to die with me ;
 Carry me forth, and set me—best of all,
 Where never mortal may set eyes on me ; 800
 Or from this land, at least, if you have pity,
 At once transport me, that I die not here.”
 We, when he gave these orders, carried him
 On board, and hardly brought him here, to shore,
 Convulsed and groaning. And immediately
 You will behold him, living, or just dead.
 Such designs, mother, and such deeds of yours
 Against my father are detected ; which
 May the Erinys and requiting Right
 Avenge on you !—if the prayer be not sin ;
 And sin it is not ; since you made it sinless, 810
 When the best man of all on earth, like whom
 Another you shall never see, you murdered !

I LADY

Why do you move off mute ? Do you not know
 Your silence pleads upon the accuser's side ?

Exit DEIANIRA.

HYLLUS

Let her move off ! Let fair winds go with her,
 Far as she goes, out of my sight, for good !
 For why respect the assumption of a name,
 Merely, of mother—all unmotherly
 As she has been ? Let her depart and welcome !

And may those same delights which she confers
Upon my father come to be her own!

820

*Exit.**Chorus*

I. 1.

Look, children, in what sense
The heaven-sent voice, of the ancient prescience,
Bursts on us all at once, which prophesied,
When the full months of the twelfth harvest-tide
Should have run out, they should conclude his line
Of Labours, to the son of Jove divine!
And this it wafts right on, safely to shore;
For how could one who sees the light no more
Yet be the slave
Of labours, in the grave?

830

I. 2.

For seeing how Destiny,
Armed with the Centaur's bloody mystery,
Framer of treasons, is anointing him,
A venom, too, being slaked into each limb
Fathered by Death, born of a serpent's hiss,
How shall he see one sunrise after this?
Round him what Hydra-shape most hideous clings!
What swart-maned monster's murderous guileful stings,
Fevering the vein,
Mingle, to work his bane!

840

II. 1.

While she, poor soul, who could perceive
Harm to the house, monstrous, without reprieve,
In this new bridal's hastening speed,
Of these woes some, indeed,
Never inflicted; others, that were planned
To fatal issues by a foreign mind,
How does she mourn whose was the death-giving hand!
How does she weep soft dews of womanly tears!
But in the impending fate plainly appears
Mischiefs huge, and cunningly designed.

850

II. 2.

A fountain of tears has broken bound;
A plague—O misery! is diffused around,
Such as before no suffering
On our magnificent king

Came, even from foes, to do him injury.
 O thou black lance, foremost of battle-spears,
 It was thy point from towering Œchaly
 Conducted hitherward a hurrying bride;
 But Cypris, who in silence walked beside,
 Causer of this now manifest appears.

860

I LADY

Am I deceived? or do I hear some voice
 Of lamentation through the house, new-raised?
 What do I say?

2 LADY

There is a cry not undistinguishable
 Indoors, yea, a sad wailing; and the abode
 Has something new to shew us.

I LADY

Look at her,
 How strange toward us, and with gathered brows,
 The beldam speeds, to signify some tale.

870

Enter NURSE.

NURSE

O maidens dear!
 How has that gift we sent to Hercules
 Been the beginning of great woes to us!

I LADY

O mother, of what new deed have you to tell us?

NURSE

The latest of all journeyings Deianire
 Has taken; a journey without stirring.

I LADY

What,
 You do not say she is dead?

NURSE

You have heard all.

I LADY

She has died, unhappy!

NURSE

Yes, I say again.

I LADY

Death-boding wretch! How do you say she died?

NURSE

Most desperately, for the way of it.

I LADY

Tell us what sort of death she met with, woman. 880

NURSE

Herself she slew.

I LADY

*What wrath—what frenzy-fit
Could grasp the steel, the harming weapon? How
Could she contrive, singly, and execute
Death—upon death?*

NURSE

Through the sword's woeful cleaving.

I LADY

O dolt, did you look on at this rash deed?

NURSE

Yes, I looked on; for I was standing by her.

I LADY

Who was it—how—quick, tell us—

NURSE

*She herself,
Of her own self, set her own hand to do it.*

I LADY

What say you?

NURSE

Sooth.

I LADY

*Unto this house is born
A giant Fury—born of this new bride!*

NURSE

Too true, indeed. But far more vehemently,
Had you been by to witness what she did,
Would you have pitied her.

I LADY

Could woman's hand
Bear to accomplish this?

NURSE

Yes, ruthlessly.

But you shall hear, that you may bear me out.
After she came into the house, alone, 900
And saw her son spreading in the vestibule
An easy litter, to return with it
And meet his father, first she hid herself
Where none might see her; knelt before the hearth,
And mourned that she had been left desolate;
And wept at touching any household gear
That she was wont to use, poor thing, before;
And to and fro ranging about the palace,
If any of her own servants met her view,
She wept, poor miserable, to gaze on them;
To her own self chiding her destiny, 910
And state, that must be childless evermore.
When she left this, suddenly I saw her dart
Into the bed-chamber of Heracles;
And I kept watch, close hidden in the shade,
Spying unobserved; and saw the woman fling
Bed-clothes, spread out, upon his bed. This done,
She sprang up into it, and so sat her down
Among the pillows; then, forcing a way

For the warm fountains of her tears, she said—
“O bed and bower that are mine, henceforth 920
Never again shall I lie down to rest
In your embrace; farewell for evermore!”
Thus much she spake; and with unflinching hand
Undid her dress, which had a golden brooch
To fasten across her bosom; and laid bare
All her left arm and side. I ran at once,
As fast as I was able, and told her son
What she was doing; and within the time
That we were running thither and back again,
We found she had been stricken in the side 930
With a sharp-pointed weapon, towards the heart.
And the youth saw it, and shrieked; for well he knew—
Wretch—that his wrath had brought this thing to pass,
Having been told, too late, by those within,
How at the Centaur’s word she did the deed,
Not purposely; and the poor boy since then
Has not ceased wailing, crying around her body,
Stooping to kiss her! Side by side with her
Has he been lying prostrate, moaning loud,
How with vile blame, falsely, he had smitten her, 940
Mourning that he would be bereaved for life
Of her and of his father, both at once.
So is it in this house; wherefore, if any
Count on two days, or any more, to come,
He is a fool; for a man has no morrow,
Till by good luck he has got through to-day.

Chorus

I. 1.

Which shall I mourn for first?
Which of my griefs is the worst?
Woe is me! ’Twere hard to select.

I. 2.

One is at hand, here within; 950
Another about to begin:
And ’tis all one—have or expect.

II. I.

I would that some home-breeze, some favouring gale, would blow,
And waft me far from the spot, that I might not die with woe
Suddenly, merely at seeing the son of Jove, the strong,
Now that in anguish past all cure he is borne along
Home—as they tell ;
Portent unspeakable !

II. 2.

Oh near and not far off is the sorrow at which I cry,
 Shrill as a nightingale ! for without, strange steps draw nigh,
 Bringing him—whither now? Noiseless and slow they come ;
 Tenderly, as a friend, they bear him. He is dumb !
 What shall be said?
 Is he asleep, or dead?

970

Enter HYLLUS, *an Old Man*, and attendants, carrying
HERACLES.

HYLLUS

Woe's me for thee, father ! Woe's me for thee !
Alack, what shall I do ?
What shall I turn me to ?
O woe is me !

OLD MAN

Hush, child, lest you excite
Fierce anguish in your father's frenzied breast ;
He lives, but barely. Keep your lips compressed ;
Set your teeth tight.

HYLLUS

What do you say, old man? Does he live still?

OLD MAN

See that you do not wake the slumberer,
Nor start nor stir
The dreadful spasm of suffering, O my child ! 980

HYLLUS

But with an unapproachable weight of ill
My anguished spirit is wild.

HERACLES

Zeus! In what land am I?
Among what folk do I lie
Worn out with ceaseless pain?
—Woe's me! Again
The loathsome thing gnaws me. Alas, Alas!

OLD MAN

Had you no inkling how far better it was
To hold your peace, and not to scatter, now,
The slumber from his eyelids and his brow?

990

HYLLUS

Only I cannot help it, when I see
This sight of misery!

HERACLES

O altar floor of Ceneum's heights,
What payment, for what sacred rites,
Hast thou bestowed on me!
What hurt, what mischief hast thou done—
O Jove, to me, unhappy one!
Would I had ceased to see,
Before mine eyes had ever viewed
This flower of madness unsubdued!

1000

For what magician,
What physician,
Zeus apart,
Can heal this smart?
Prodigy which I should see
From far off, if such could be.
O let me—let me—let me rest
In my last last sleep oppressed!
Why do you touch me? Where do you want to lay me?
You will slay me—will slay me!
You have unset
What might be slumbering yet.

Alack, it has fastened on me! It comes, it comes again! 1010
Where are you, O most faithless of Greeks, for whom, on the main
Oft, and all woodlands through, worn out with labour and pain,
Cleansing the ways, I went? And now, in my agony,

Flame or sword not one will afford to deliver me—
Alas!

Or will condescend to approach me, and separate
My head from life, which I hate!

OLD MAN

O Alcides' son, this is far too heavy a spell
For my sole strength to meet; do you take hold as well.
Sound sight is yours, fitter to nurse, than I can supply.

HYLLUS

I lay hold. But neither with aid, nor alone, can I 1020
Make it painless for him to live. Such cures are given from on high.

HERACLES

Son, where art thou?

On this side, this side now,

Raise me and hold by me.

Ah, Ah, thou Power! It throbs, it throbs again,

The miserable, fierce, insurmountable pain, 1030

Slaying me utterly!

Again, O Pallas, Pallas, this torment vexes me!

O boy, pity your father, and draw your sword, blame-free,

And strike me under the neck, and the aching pain assuage

Whereat your impious mother has filled my heart with rage;

Whom may I yet behold, so perishing, even so,

As me she did destroy! O friendly Hades! O 1040

Brother of Jove! Send rest, send speedy rest in death!

Stop my sad breath!

I LADY

I shudder, listening to the griefs, so great,

Wherewith, O friends, our king, so great, is harried.

HERACLES

How many and how fierce and sore to tell

The labours I with body and hands have wrought!

And such an one not even the Spouse of Jove

Set me, or the abhorred Eurystheus, ever,

As this, which Ceneus' daughter crafty-faced 1050

Fitted upon my shoulders—the web-toil

Woven of the Furies, which is shattering me.

For plastered to my sides, it has gnawed off

The surface of my flesh, and settles in
And battens on the channels of the lungs,
And has already drained all my fresh life-blood,
And through my whole frame I am overthrown,
Worsted by this unthought-for fetterment !
Treatment such as I never yet endured—
No, not from lances in the battle-field,
Or Giants' earthborn army, or Centaurs' might,
Or Grecian or barbarian, or all lands 1060
Which I, cleansing their borders, visited ;
But one sole woman—a female, not a male
By sex—weaponless—put an end to me.
O boy, now shew yourself my true-born son ;
Set not the name of mother over mine ;
But with your own hands hale out of the house
And render her that bare you into mine,
That I may know whether you grieve to see
This form of mine abused, rather than hers
In justice punished. Up, my son, take courage ! 1070
Have pity on me, whom any men might pity,
Lying here moaning, weeping like a girl—
A thing which not one mortal could have said
That he had ever seen me do before ;
Rather I would follow, uncomplaining still,
Where my hard fortunes led me. Now, alas,
Falling from this, I have been proved a woman.
And now come near ; stand by your father's side ;
See under what infliction I thus suffer ;
Here, I will shew you without coverings ;
Lo, behold all, a miserable frame !
Mark me, poor wretch, how I am pitiable ! 1080
—O woe ! Alas, ah me,
Again, once more, that racking fever pain
Right through my side ! The desperate gnawing plague
Will not release me from its harassing ;
O Hades, king, receive me ! O Jove's lightning, strike me !
Smite me, O king ! Dart down thy thunderbolt,
Father, on me ! for once again it revels,
It has blossomed—it has burst forth. O hands—hands,

O back and breast, O shoulder-blades of mine, 1090
 And have you come to this, who formerly
 Beat down by force the lion-habitant
 Of Nemea, the perilous beast and wild,
 Fatal to herdsmen; and the water-snake
 Of Lerna; and the twy-form prancing host
 Of Centaurs, insolent, unsocial, rude,
 Rampant in might; and the Erymanthian boar;
 And the infernal triple-headed hound
 Of Hades, the resistless monster, whelp
 Of the dread Basilisk; and the Dragon-guard
 Of golden apples, growing at the world's end? 1100
 And countless other toils I tasted of,
 And no man set up trophies over me!
 Now here I lie, with dislocated bones,
 With lacerated flesh, by a dark mischief
 Utterly cast away, unhappy! I,
 Named of a mother most illustrious,
 Reputed son of Zeus, Lord of the stars!
 But be ye sure of this; though I be nothing,
 Albeit I cannot move, even as I am,
 Her who did this still I can overcome;
 Let her come only, that she may be taught, 1110
 And have it to relate to all, how I,
 Living and dying, punished wickedness!

I LADY

Alas for Greece! what mourning I perceive
 Awaits her, if this hero is lost unto her!

HYLLUS

Since by vouchsafing silence you vouchsafed
 Room, father, to reply—though you are sick,
 Listen to me; I shall demand of you
 What 'tis but fair I meet with. Lend yourself
 To what I say, not so incensed in spirit
 As you are racked with pain; you cannot, else,
 Learn your mistake, in that which you desire
 To make you glad, and in what angers you.

HERACLES

Say what you wish, and cease; for I, being sick, 1120
Understand nothing of your stale mystery.

HYLLUS

I am come to tell you of my mother; of
Her state; and how she erred unwittingly.

HERACLES

O villain, dare you breathe that mother's name,
Your father's murderess, in my ears again?

HYLLUS

Her story is such as must not stay untold.

HERACLES

No truly, seeing how she transgressed before.

HYLLUS

Nor will you say so of her deeds to-day.

HERACLES

Speak; but look to it, lest you be found perverse.

HYLLUS

I speak. She is dead. She is but now just slain. 1130

HERACLES

By whom? You tell me wonders, in my trouble.

HYLLUS

By her own hand, none other.

HERACLES

Woe is me!

Ere, as was fit, she could be slain by me!

HYLLUS

Even your wrath would be turned, if you knew all.

HERACLES

It is a strange tale. Tell it your own way.

HYLLUS

Through the whole business she sinned, meaning well.

HERACLES

Did she do well, villain, to slay your sire?

HYLLUS

Nay, meaning, when she saw the bride within,
To administer a charm to win your love,
She was deceived.

HERACLES

And what Trachinian was there 1140
So great a sorcerer?

HYLLUS

Nessus long ago—
The Centaur—made her trust with such a charm
To impassion your desire.

HERACLES

O miserable!

I am lost, alas, I am undone, undone!
Light is no more for me! Well do I know,
Woe's me, in what extremity I stand!
O son, thou hast no more a father! Come,
Call hither all thy stock of brothers; call
The sad Alcmena, spouse of Jove in vain,
That ye may hear the latest oracle
Of all that have been given me to declare. 1150

HYLLUS

Your mother is not here; for some time past
She has dwelt at Tiryns, hard by the sea shore.
And of your sons she has taken some with her,
And rears them there herself; and some, you know,
Dwell in the town of Thebes; but all of us,
Father, here present, hearken, and will obey,
If there is anything for us to do.

HERACLES

Then listen: it is time for thee to shew
What sort of man thou art, who art called mine.
It was foretold me by my sire of old
That by no creature breathing I should die, 1160
But by some dweller in Hades, who was dead.
And so it is, this Centaur-monster, dead,
As Heaven foretold it, is the death of me,
Who am alive. And following upon this
I will disclose to you fresh oracles
Agreeing with the old, which I wrote down,
When I was come into the sacred grove
Of the earth-couching Sellian highland-men,
At my own father's many-tongued oak-tree.
Which at this present instant of my life
Said—my deliverance should be fulfilled 1170
From my incumbent labours; and I thought
I should do well; but it was nothing else,
Really, but death for me; for to the dead
There comes no labour more. Therefore, my child,
Now these things come out clear, you must become
Once more my aider, and not tarry for
My voice to spur you on; but of yourself
Yield, and assist me; recognizing it
For best of laws, a father to obey.

HYLLUS

O father, I am terrified to embark
On such a quest; but I will do your pleasure. 1180

HERACLES

First, place your hand in mine.

HYLLUS

To what intent
Do you press this pledge upon me, all too far?

HERACLES

Give it at once, and disobey me not

HYLLUS

See, there it is; I will gainsay you nothing.

HERACLES

Swear by the head of Jove now, who begat me.

HYLLUS

What to perform?—Am I to say this, too?

HERACLES

To execute the deed I bid you do.

HYLLUS

I swear it, and take Jove to witness.

HERACLES

Pray

You may find punishment, if you transgress!

HYLLUS

I shall not find it; for I shall perform.

1190

Natheless I pray.

HERACLES

Now, do you know Jove's peak,

On Ceta's top?

HYLLUS

Yes, I have often been

Up there to sacrifice.

HERACLES

To that spot, now

In your own arms, and with what friends you choose,

You must take up my body; and lop much timber

Of the deep-rooted oak, and fell therewith

Much wild male-olive, and upon it cast

My body; and take a pine-wood torch, alight,

And burn it. And let no sob interfere

Of sorrowing; but without groan or tear,

1200

As you are mine, perform it. Else will I

In anger haunt you, even from beneath,

Yea, with a curse, for ever.

HYLLUS

Father! Oh

What have you done to me? What have you said?

HERACLES

What must be done. Otherwise claim, instead,
Some other sire—be called my son no more.

HYLLUS

Woe's me again! what do you call me to,
Father? to be your slayer and murderer?

HERACLES

Not so; but the one healer and physician
Whom I have left, of my calamities.

HYLLUS

How can it heal, to set your body on fire?

1210

HERACLES

Well, if you shrink from this, still, do the rest.

HYLLUS

The pains will not be grudged of carrying you.

HERACLES

Nor store of wood to burn, as I have said?

HYLLUS

Nothing, save touching it with hands of mine;
All else I will perform; I will not tire.

HERACLES

Well, that is quite enough. But grant me, too,
Besides your other great ones, one small favour.

HYLLUS

Even if very great, it shall be done.

HERACLES

You know the maid, daughter of Eurytus?

HYLLUS

You mean, as I conjecture, Iole?

1220

HERACLES

Right! This is all I lay upon you, child.
When I am dead, as you are dutiful,
Think of your filial oath; obey your sire;
Make her your wife, and let no other man
Ever touch her, who has lain by my side,
Instead of you; but undertake this marriage,
O boy, yourself. Do it! for in small things
To disobey me, and in great obey,
Spoils all your former bounty.

HYLLUS

O my heart!

To be incensed with a sick man is wicked;
But who could bear to see him minded thus?

1230

HERACLES

You mutter, as if meaning to do nought
Of what I say!

HYLLUS

Why, who would take her, ever,
Who was the sole cause of my mother's death,
And more than that, of your being—as you are?
Who that was not infatuate could do it?
Father, 'twere better that I too were dead,
Than living, joined with my worst enemies!

HERACLES

It seems this fellow will not do me right
Now I am dying. But know, the curse of Heaven
Awaits you, if you disobey my words.

1240

HYLLUS

Alas, I fear you will be saying, soon,
You are in pain!

HERACLES

Yes—you are stirring me
From slumber of my torment.

HYLLUS

Miserable!
How utterly at a loss I am!

HERACLES

Because
You do not choose to mind your father's bidding.

HYLLUS

But father, am I really to be taught
Impiety?

HERACLES

It is not impiety
To gratify my longing.

HYLLUS

Do you bid me
To do it, and incur no guilt?

HERACLES

I do.
I call the Gods to be my witnesses.

HYLLUS

Well, then I will; I will not turn away,
If I can tell the Gods it is your doing.
Wicked I never can appear, my sire,
If I obey you.

1250

HERACLES

You are right at last.
And add to these, my son, the boon of speed,
So that before some spasm, some frenzy happens,
You may deposit me upon the pyre.
Come, hurry, uplift me. This is rest from woes—
The hero's life brought to its latest close.

HYLLUS

Well father, since you order and compel it,
Nothing impedes our doing all this for you.

HERACLES

Come, come along,
Ere yet again
They wake thy pain,
O stubborn heart !
With bridle strong,
Of steel, of stone,
Silence each groan ;
Finish thy part
Rejoicingly,
Hard though it be.

1260

HYLLUS

Raise him, followers ; freely, now,
Pardon what I do, in me ;
Freely, too, in the Gods allow
Folly, for the things you see ;
Who though sires, though fathers named,
See such sufferings unashamed.
What is future, nobody knows ;
But what is present, full of woes
Is to us—to them disgrace,
And, of the whole human race,
Cruellest to the man who bears
This extremity of cares.

1270

Nor do thou, maiden, stay in the house ;
Who hast seen great deaths and marvellous,
And sufferings many and strange indeed,
And none of them, save what Zeus decreed.

Exeunt omnes.

NOTES.

7. Read *δκνον*, with the MSS., not *δτλον*.

17. "His bed." Wunder's alteration, *τοῦδε* for *τῆσδε*, is rejected by other editors; but my rendering is within permissible limits, I think, in either case.

31. The key to the interpretation of this passage is I think the word *πόνον*, which is used in this play almost as a specific name for the "labours" of Heracles. See ll. 170, 875. There is, further, in the word *διαδεδεγμένη* an allusion to the torch-race, or *λαμπαδηφορία*.

49. I have to acknowledge obligations in this line, and in ll. 80, 160, 201 and 233, to Professor Campbell's spirited translation of this play.

84. The line thus numbered in Dindorf's text, and bracketed by him, I have omitted. Either 84 or 85 is bound to go.

88—91. I follow Wunder in transposing these two couplets. On any other hypothesis, one of them must be sacrificed.

94. I have never been able to persuade myself that *αἶολος*, as an epithet of night, here and in l. 132, has wandered so far from its Homeric meaning as to be equivalent to "star-spangled" or "twinkling with stars." "With fleeting shadows" I should render it; and this meaning is I think indicated by the poetry. On the other hand *ἐναριζόμενα* does seem to have parted with all meaning of "being stripped" or "despoiled."

116. I can make no sense of this passage, in its general relation to the context, if either *τρέφει* or *αὔξει* is taken to indicate any fortunate or glorious result for the hero. The brighter side of the picture is introduced by *ἀλλὰ* in the next line. I follow Hermann's interpretation.

134. I follow Mr Pretor's rendering.

145. I have nowhere seen an explanation or emendation of this passage which I can adopt with satisfaction. Inasmuch as the beauty of it calls loudly for courage in a translator, I venture on a suggestion, namely, to read *αὐτοῦ*, "where it finds itself," instead of *αὐτοῦ*. Professor Paley, as I find from Mr Pretor, has made the same proposal; but his interpretation does not, in my opinion, bring out the meaning.

The demonstrative force of *τοιούσδε* is my key to the passage. She points to the cattle-pastures, when the cows are feeding; they are stationary, not like horses, which range. See ll. 188, 271, 529, and compare the beautiful fragment, *Tereus*, 517.

214. I omit *θεὰν*, with the MSS.

228. I follow the punctuation of the Poet. Sc. Gr., not that of Dindorf's small edition.

238. "Meat-offerings," i. e. offerings of the fruits of earth, as in the English version of the O. T. by King James's translators. The Victorian translators have altered it to "meal offerings," which would not suit this passage.

233. I follow the MSS. reading, *διόισει*, and adopt Mr Pretor's interpretation.

327. *διήνεμον* may possibly be a mere epithet, a reminiscence of the Homeric *ἡνεμοέσσαν*. But Sophocles seems to be fond of charging his epithets with meaning, even when he adapts them from Homer. Compare *τμητοῖς ἱμάσι*, in *El.* 747. The order of the words, and a comparison of *πολύφθορος*, l. 477, make for this interpretation.—For *τύχη*, meaning the way in which things happen, see l. 724.

339. I have rejected Dindorf's punctuation, here and in l. 444.

383. Point is given to this apparently trivial piece of moralizing, if we compare Deianira's language in l. 596, and the assent of the Chorus. See also l. 691.

554. I read *ἔχει*, and reject Dindorf's punctuation.

603. Read *τόνδε γ' εὐνφῆ*, not *τανανφῆ*, as Dindorf.

638. "The Grecian States"—their Assemblies, that is, or Parliaments; *ἀγόραι* in the Greek.

652. I read *οἰστρηθεῖς*, not *εὖ στρωθεῖς*, or *αὖ στρωθεῖς*, as Dindorf. I adopt Professor Paley's proposal to substitute Eros for Ares. This makes it better to take Deianira, not Heracles, as the subject of *ἐξέλυσσε*, and to construe the verb as an aorist with present signification.

715. Dindorf reads *χῶσπερ* in the small edition, *χῶνπερ* in Poet. Sc. Gr. I follow the latter, with the MSS.

720. *ὀρμῇ* seems here to have the derivative meaning of an instant of time. The English and Latin word "moment" has undergone the same conversion.

728. "Not crabbed" is a tempting equivalent for *πέπειρα*, but it is perhaps hardly smooth enough for this context.

771. Some commentators change *ὡς* to *ὥς*, and alter the punctua-

tion, in order to avoid making Hyllus speak as if with knowledge that the poison was that of the Hydra. There are however more places than one, in this play, where an inconsistency of the sort is observable. This interpretation seems to miss the force of the imperfect, *ἐδαινυτο*, and of the emphatic *δὴ*, which follows.

809. The modern notion of "sin," it has been urged, was unknown to a pagan Greek. This may be so; and yet, it seems to me, the opposite of sin is fairly well denoted by *θέμις*.—*προῖβαλες* I take in its simplest sense, "attribuisti," "thou didst place in my way."

844. *προςβάλλω*, here and in l. 580, I take in its simple meaning, "contribute," or "throw in": throw, that is, either in addition to something else, or on the top of some receiver. The Scholiast who imagined that it could mean "paid attention to," or "comprehended," seems to me to travel a long way round, and bring nothing home.

854. Accepting the theory, that in this corrupt passage *Ἡρακλέους* is a gloss, representing some periphrasis for the hero, I think *ἀγάκλειτον* must be an epithet of him, and not of *πάθος*.—I have adopted Wunder's emendation—*αἰκλίσαι*, for *οἰκτρίσαι*.

1046. This speech has been well translated by Cicero. I follow him, and the MSS., and not Dindorf, in reading *καὶ λόγῳ κακά*.

1091. I follow Professor Paley's rendering.

1266. This summing up of the moral of the story, as in the case of Teucer's speech in the Ajax, it is impossible to reconcile, unless by toning down the expressions, with the conventional piety sometimes attributed to Sophocles; especially if we refer back to l. 140. The other aspect of the fate of Hercules is well stated at the conclusion of the Philoctetes.

1275. I read *ἐπ' οἴκων*. The MSS. reading has never, I think, been satisfactorily explained. The "maiden" addressed is the Chorus-leader, certainly not Iole.

PHILOCTETES

PHILOCTETES

PERSONS REPRESENTED

ULYSSES, *prince of Ithaca.*

NEOPTOLEMUS, *the young prince of Scyros, son of Achilles.*

PHILOCTETES, *prince of Trachis, son of Pæas.*

A scout attending on Neoptolemus, afterwards disguised as the master of a trading vessel.

HERACLES.

The CHORUS is composed of Scyrian sailors, followers of NEOPTOLEMUS.

Mate of the Scyrian crew; Attendants.

PHILOCTETES

*Scene, a desert place on the coast of Lemnos;
in the background a cave.*

Enter ULYSSES, NEOPTOLEMUS, and Attendant.

ULYSSES

This is the shore of Lemnos' sea-girt isle,
Untrod by mortals, uninhabited,
Where once, O scion of the first of Greeks,
Achilles' offspring, Neoptolemus,
Under commission from our generals
I set on shore the Melian, Pœas' son,
His foot all bleeding with an ulcerous wound,
What time it was not possible for us
To set our hands in peace and quietness
To a drink-offering or burnt-sacrifice,
But ever with wild desecrating cries
He kept the whole encampment in distress,
Groaning, lamenting. But why tell this tale?
It is no time for many words from us,
Lest he should learn of my arrival here,
And so the whole contrivance be upset
By which I think to take him presently.
Now you must work, and help to accomplish it;
So look around, where in this neighbourhood
There is a grotto with two entrances,
So situate, that at one or other end
There is a sunny seat when it is cold,
While in the summer time a breeze sends sleep,
Blowing through the tunnelled chamber. And perhaps

10

A little underneath, on the left hand,
You may discover a fresh water-spring,
If it is still in being. Go up thither
Softly, and inform me if my words apply
To this same quarter, or if otherwise ;
Then I can tell you what remains to say,
And you can hear, and we can act together.

20

NEOPTOLEMUS *ascending the rocks*

The work you speak of, King Ulysses, lies
Not distant ; for I think I see a cave
Such as you mentioned.

ULYSSES

High up, or low down ?

I cannot spy it.

NEOPTOLEMUS

Here, above us ; and
Here is a foot-print on the threshold !

ULYSSES

Eh !

Take care that he is not asleep inside !

30

NEOPTOLEMUS

The abode is empty, and the folk away.

ULYSSES

Nor any household furniture within ?

NEOPTOLEMUS

Yes, flattened leaves, as of some inmate's bed.

ULYSSES

And the rest empty, and nothing under-roof ?

NEOPTOLEMUS

Here is a cup cut out of wood, the work
Of a rude craftsman ; and a pair of flints, too.

ULYSSES

What you exhibit is his treasure-heap !

NEOPTOLEMUS

Hilloa ! here are some rags as well, still warm,
Full of some pestilent unwholesomeness.

ULYSSES

The man lives in these precincts, it is clear,
And cannot be far off. How could a man,
Lame with an old affliction in his limb,
Walk any distance? But he has gone out,
Either in quest of food, or of some herb,
If he knows any anodyne. Send therefore
Your follower to explore, lest he should take me
At unawares ; for he would like to get
Me, more than all the Argives, in his power.

40

could

NEOPTOLEMUS *descending*

He is going, and the track shall be secured.

Exit Attendant.

Now speak again, and say what is your pleasure.

ULYSSES

Son of Achilles, you must shew yourself
Stout on this errand ; not in limbs alone,
But also in service—if you hear a thing
Novel, of a kind you have not heard before ;
Since you are here to serve.

50

NEOPTOLEMUS

What are your orders? ★

ULYSSES

You are to inveigle, by the words you utter,
The spirit of Philoctetes. When he asks
Who and whence are you, say—Achilles' son ;
This is not to be hidden ; and you sail homeward,
Deserting from the Achaians' naval host,
Hating them with a mighty hatred ; who,
Sending for you with prayers to come from home,
As their sole means of taking Ilium,

60

Thought it not meet to give you, when you came,
 Achilles' armour, which you claimed of them,
 But gave it to Ulysses in your room;
 Saying what you please of evil against me
 The extremest of extreme. For by so doing
 You will not hurt me; but if you refuse
 To do this duty, you will bring down trouble
 On all the Argives. For if this man's arrows
 Are not first captured, 'tis impossible
 That you should vanquish the Dardanian hold.
 Now, how that intercourse there cannot be 70
 With him on my part, while on yours there can,
 Both safe and solid, learn. You have made voyage
 Not under oath to any, nor compelled,
 Nor of the army that at first set sail;
 But nought of this can be denied of me;
 Hence, if he sees me, shafts in hand, I perish,
 And shall involve you with me in my ruin.
 This is the thing to be devised, then; how
 You shall appropriate the unrivalled weapons.
 Of course I know that it is not your nature
 To say such things, or contrive injuries; 80
 But, for 'tis sweet to get the gain of winning,
 Dare! In the end we shall be justified.
 Now, for a day's short fragment, lend yourself
 To ruthlessness; and then to after-time
 Be called the most religious of mankind!

NEOPTOLEMUS

The sort of things I chafe to hear prescribed,
 Son of Laertes—these I hate to do;
 'Tis not my nature to do aught by guile;
 Not mine, nor, as they say, his who begat me.
 Ready I am to bring the man by force, 90
 And not by fraud. For he, lame of one foot,
 Will not worst us at force, being so many.
 Nevertheless, being sent to work with you,
 I am averse to be called recreant;

But I prefer, sir king, rather to fail
In doing well, than to succeed by ill.

ULYSSES

Son of an excellent father, I myself
Was youthful once, and had a backward tongue,
And an officious hand; but now through trial
I find the words and not the acts of men
Always prevailing.

NEOPTOLEMUS

Why, what else do you bid me
But say what's false?

100

ULYSSES

I tell you by deceit
To capture Philoctetes.

NEOPTOLEMUS

Why by fraud
To bring him, rather than persuading him?

ULYSSES

He cannot be persuaded; and by force
You could not take him.

NEOPTOLEMUS

Has he some resource
Of strength so formidable?

ULYSSES

Unerring darts,
Whose points are tipped with death.

NEOPTOLEMUS

And is it not
Within a brave man's power to cope with him?

ULYSSES

No, save by guile he take him, as I say.

NEOPTOLEMUS

Do you not think foul shame to tell a lie?

ULYSSES

[Not when my safety hangs upon the lie.

NEOPTOLEMUS

Why, with what face could a man blurt it out? 110

ULYSSES

[You must not scruple, when you work for gain.

NEOPTOLEMUS

What do I gain, if he should come to Troy?

ULYSSES

npt. Only these shafts take Troy.

NEOPTOLEMUS

And am not I
The man to storm it, as was prophesied?

ULYSSES

Not you apart from these, nor these from you.

NEOPTOLEMUS

Well, I may have to seek them, that being so.

ULYSSES

You will achieve two prizes, if you do it.

NEOPTOLEMUS

Which? If I knew them, I might not refuse.

ULYSSES

upon
emph [To be called wise and valiant, both in one.

NEOPTOLEMUS

Go to, I'll do it, and let all shame go by. 120

ULYSSES

Do you remember what I told you?

NEOPTOLEMUS

Yes,
Rely on't; I assented once for all.

Re-enter Attendant.

ULYSSES

Do you remain then, and await him here ;
 But I will hence, lest I should be espied,
 And send your scout off to the ship again ;
 Then, if I deem that you are wasting time,
 I will send this same fellow back once more,
 Disguised like a sea-captain in costume,
 That he may not be known ; from whom, my son,
 Gather, as he speaks craftily, whate'er 130
 Has relevancy of his words. Meanwhile
 I seek the vessel, and leave this to you ;
 May Hermes the Conductor be our guide
 In cunning, and the civic Victory,
 Athana, who preserves me evermore.

Exeunt ULYSSES and Attendant.

Enter Scyrian Sailors, as Chorus.

I. 1.

Chorus

What, O my master, what must I conceal—
 A stranger on strange soil—or what reveal,
 In presence of a man jealous of me?
 Tell me: for his art passes other art,
 And counsel other counsel, in whose hand
 Is Jove's Olympian sceptre of command. 140
 And now that upon thee
 Is come, O son, all this time-honoured sway,
 Say thou what part
 In serving thee it is for me to play.

NEOPTOLEMUS

Now, for perhaps it pleases you to pry
 In corners, for the spot where he may lie,
 Use your eyes with freedom ; but whenever
 From these halls shall come a traveller grim
 To my side step forward, and endeavour
 To afford me help to cope with him.

I. 2.

Chorus

Master, thou bid'st me heed, as I did heed, 150
 To keep an eye on thy most urgent need;
 Now tell me in what sort of habitation,
 And in what quarter, he is wont to dwell;
 That I should know is not unreasonable,
 Lest he from somewhere unexpectedly
 Should light on me,
 What is his beat, or what his usual station,
 What errand he may now be going about,
 Within doors or without.

NEOPTOLEMUS

*Thou seest this abode, tunnelled quite through,
 Making a stony resting-place?* 160

I SCYRIAN

And whither

Has the poor habitant betaken himself?

NEOPTOLEMUS

Tis plain to me that in his need of food
 He is gone gleaning through this neighbourhood.
 For they say it is his way of living,
 Game to shoot with arrows from his bow,
 And with grief of sickness ever grieving
 Still to find no healer for his woe.

II. 1.

Chorus

Poor, unfriended and alone,
 Thee we pity, hapless one! 170
 Without friend to care for thee,
 Without glance of sympathy,
 Sick in frame, with sickness sore,
 Driven to wander evermore
 At the call of hunger, how—
 How, ill-fated one, dost thou
 Still sustain thy sinking heart?
 O the wiles of human art!
 O unhappy tribes of man,
 How do your woes exceed your vital span!

II. 2.

He, perchance of no less worth 180
 Than the men of elder birth,
 Lingers on in life, illstarred,
 Prostrate, of all friends debarred ;
 Harboured with the shaggy bear,
 Or the pard with spotted hair ;
 In disease, in want, forlorn,
 By o'ermastering anguish worn ;
 Echo, too, in under tones
 Answers to his bitter moans,
 Borne along from far away
 With insuppressive voice, knowing no stay. 190

NEOPTOLEMUS

*None of these things are marvellous to me ;
 For from above, if I know anything,
 Those sufferings came upon him, by the hand
 Of the hard-hearted Chrysa ; and what now
 He bears of labours, far from comforters,
 Cannot but be by some God's providence,
 For that he should not, in assault of Troy,
 Draw to the head the unconquered bolts divine,
 Before that hour shall come when, we are told,
 It is Troy's fate to be subdued by them.* 200

III. 1.

Chorus

Hush, my son.

NEOPTOLEMUS

Why?

Chorus

A sound rose clear—
 Sound of the cry of a wearied man,
 This way, or that ; I hear—I hear
 The footfall's accents true
 Creeping onward, as best it can ;
 The deep sigh, too,
 Marking a soul bowed down with pain,
 Though far off, scapes not me ;
 For he mourns, plain
 For all to see.

III. 2.

But, my son—

210

NEOPTOLEMUS

What?

Chorus

Bethink thee anew;
 For the man is not far, but near,
 Not, as a shepherd swain might do,
 Piping a tune of merry cheer,
 But either, stumbling, he cries perforce
 With far-heard shout,
 Or viewing the strange unwelcomed course
 Of a ship to ground;
 For he sends out
 A scaring sound.

Enter PHILOCTETES.

PHILOCTETES

Ho strangers, who are you, who have put in 220
 With galley to this coast—sea without port,
 Shore without shelter? Of what land or race
 Am I to guess you? for your garments' guise
 Is Grecian—best beloved of all to me;
 And I would hear you speak. Be not struck dumb
 With terror at the wildness of my looks;
 But pitying an unhappy man—alone—
 Desolate thus and friendless in his wrongs,
 If you are come in friendship, speak to me.
 Give me some answer! 'Twere unnatural 230
 I should lack this from you, or you from me.

NEOPTOLEMUS

Sir stranger, know this first, we are of Greece;
 Since this you fain would learn.

PHILOCTETES

O sound most welcome!
 Ah what a thing it is to be addressed,
 After long years, by such a man as you!

What need, my son, caused you to put in hither—
To come this way? What impulse? Which of winds
Most friendly? Say all this to me, aloud,
That I may know your name.

NEOPTOLEMUS

I am by birth
Of the isle of Scyros; I am sailing home; 240
My name's Neoptolemus, Achilles' son;
Now you know all.

PHILOCTETES

O son of sire most dear—
Sprout from a friendly soil—the progeny
Of ancient Lycomedes, on what errand
Made you this land, from what port voyaging?

NEOPTOLEMUS

From Ilium, truly, am I steering now.

PHILOCTETES

How say you? for you did not sail, I know,
With us at first, when we set out for Troy.

NEOPTOLEMUS

Why, were you partner in that enterprise?

PHILOCTETES

O son, do you not know the man you look on?

NEOPTOLEMUS

How should I know a man I never saw? 250

PHILOCTETES

Nor even my name, nor rumour of the ills
Which have destroyed me, did you ever hear?

NEOPTOLEMUS

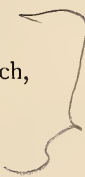
Nothing of what you ask me do I know.

PHILOCTETES

O what a drudge and sport of Gods am I!
Of whose hard fate no whisper ever came

To my own home, or any coast of Greece,
But they who thrust me out unrighteously
Laugh and keep silence, while my sickness ever
Grows on me and increases more and more.
O boy! O son, calling Achilles sire, 260
I am the man who, may be, thou hast heard
Was master of the arms of Hercules,
The son of Pœas, Philoctetes! whom
The Captains twain and the Cephallenite king
Cast out thus shamefully—deserted—sick
Of a consuming wound—pierced through and through
By the destroying viper's venomous fangs;
And in this plight, boy, they exposed me here,
Left me, and went! when from the Chrysean coast
They put in hither with their navy, straight, 270
Soon as they saw me sleeping on the beach,
Tired with long tossing, in a sheltered cave,
They laughed, they went, they left me! casting me
A few mean rags, a beggar's garniture,
And some poor pittance, too, of nourishment,
Such as, I pray, be theirs! O then, my son,
What sort of waking, think you, from that sleep
Had I when they were gone! How did I weep,
How did I wail, for my calamities!
Seeing the ships which I was leader of
All gone away, and no man in the place 280
Who should suffice me, or should comfort me
In the disease of which I laboured; yea
Though I sought everywhere, nothing I found
Left to me, save my anguish; and, my son,
Of that no lack indeed! Hour after hour
Passed by me; and I must needs make shift alone,
Under this scanty shelter. For my food,
This quiver sought out what supplied my need,
Hitting the doves on wing; then to the mark
Of the shot bolt I had to crawl, with pain, 290
Dragging a wounded foot. If upon this
I wanted to get anything to drink,
Or, as in winter when the hoar frost lay,

To break some sticks to burn, this, creeping forth,
 I had to manage, in my misery.
 Then there would be no fire ; but striking hard
 With flint on flint I struck out painfully
 An obscure spark, which keeps me still alive.
 Thus shelter overhead, not without fire,
 Furnishes all, save healing of my sore.—
 Come now and hear about the isle, my son ; 300
 No sailor willingly approaches it ;
 For anchorage there is not, or a port
 Whither a man might sail, and make his mart
 By traffic, or find welcome ; prudent men
 Do not make voyage here. Some one, perhaps,
 Might land against his will ; for these things often
 Will happen in the long-drawn life of men ;
 But such, my son, when they do come, in words
 Pity me, and in compassion give me, say
 Some morsel of food, or matter of attire ;
 But that thing no man, when I hint it, will do— 310
 Take me safe home ; but this tenth year already
 In hunger and distress I pine and perish,
 Feeding the gnawing tooth of my disease.
 The Atridæ, and Ulysses' violence,
 Have done me all this wrong ; the like of which,
 O boy, may the Olympian Gods give them
 One day to suffer, in revenge for me !



I SCYRIAN

I feel I pity thee, O Pœas' son,
 As much as any of thy visitors.

NEOPTOLEMUS

And I myself, in witness to this tale,
 Can swear 'tis true ; for I have felt their malice— 320
 The Atridæ—and Ulysses' violence.

PHILOCTETES

Have you a feud, too, with the villain sons
 Of Atreus, and are furious at your griefs ?

NEOPTOLEMUS

I wish my hand could some day satisfy
 The measure of my fury, that Mycenæ
 And Sparta both might know how Scyros also
 Is mother of stout hearts!

PHILOCTETES

Well said, my son!
 What do you charge them with? what is the cause
 Of your deep anger? why have you come hither?

NEOPTOLEMUS

O son of Pœas, I will tell you—yet
 I hardly shall know how—what injuries 330
 They did me, when I came. After Fate brought
 Achilles to his end—

PHILOCTETES

O woe is me!
 Tell me no more, till I have learnt this first,
 If Peleus' son is dead?

NEOPTOLEMUS

Yes, he is dead;
 Killed by no man, but by a God; subdued
 By Phœbus, as they tell me; arrow-slain.

PHILOCTETES

Well, noble was the slayer, and the slain.
 O son, I know not whether I shall first
 Explore your grievance, or lament for him.

NEOPTOLEMUS

Poor soul, I should have thought your own enough
 For you to mourn, without your neighbours' troubles! 340

PHILOCTETES

You have said right; therefore begin once more
 Your story of the way they injured you.

NEOPTOLEMUS

There came for me, in a fine painted vessel,
The great Ulysses, and the foster-sire
Of my own father, saying, (whether in sooth
Or, perhaps, feigning,) that it was forbidden,
Now that my sire had fallen, that any man
Other than I should storm the towers of Troy.
These things propounding, in this sort, sir friend,
They did not let me linger very long,
Before I straight embarked; urged most of all
By yearning for the dead, that I might see him 350
Before they buried him; for I never saw him;
And then the tale, no doubt, made for my honour,
That I should take the Towers, if I went.
Well, after two days' voyage I arrived
At black Sigeum, with a gale astern;
And forthwith in a circle all the host
Hailed me as I stepped on shore; swearing they saw
The dead Achilles come to life again.
All the same, dead he lay; and I, poor fool,
When I had mourned him, after no long space, 360
Going to the Atridæ, (friends, belike, of mine,)
Claimed my sire's arms and other property.
But they put forth—oh, a most pitiful tale!
“O offspring of Achilles, all the rest
That was your father's you may take, and welcome!
But those arms own another master now,
Laertes' son.” I burst out weeping straight,
And stood up in deep wrath, and spoke with anguish;
“You villain, did you dare to give my arms
Without my leave to any man but me?” 370
Then said Ulysses, who was standing by,
“Yea my son, rightly have they given them,
For on a time he owed his life to me.”
I, in a rage, straightway belaboured them
With all sorts of abuse, sparing for nought,
If that man was to snatch my arms from me!
Who, being thus driven, although not choleric,

Cut to the heart at what he heard me say,
 Retorted thus; "You were not with us! You
 Were absent from your duty! and, though you talk 380
 So bravely, you shall never sail with them
 To Scyros!" After flouts and injuries
 Of such a nature, I am steering home;
 Robbed by Ulysses, basest, and base-born,
 Of what is mine. Still, him I do not blame
 Like those in power. For a city all
 Follows its leaders; a whole host, the same;
 And men who are unruly become bad
 By force of teaching.—All my tale is told.
 May whosoever is the Atridæ's foe
 Be dear to Heaven, as he must be to me. 390

Chorus

O Mother, thou who gavest birth
 To Zeus himself! Silvan Earth,
 Who fillest all with bread;
 Who dost control
 The floods that roll
 Over Pactolus' golden bed;
 On thee we cried, Mother adored,
 When on this man was outpoured
 All the Atridæ's pride;
 What time they gave
 Harness and glaive,
 His father's—setting him aside:
 Immortal Queen, thee we invoked, 400
 Who behind thy lions yoked,
 Slayers of the herd, dost ride!
 There was won
 By Lartius' son
 Honour surpassing all beside.

PHILOCTETES

Strangers, you seem to have sailed here to me
 With a clear passport, in your injuries,
 Not dissonant with mine; I recognize
 The Atridæ's doings, and Ulysses' hand.
 For I am certain he would have a voice
 In every evil word and wickedness,

And that thereout he is not like to bring
Anything just to pass. I wonder, though,
Never at this—but that the greater Ajax,
If present, seeing it done, permitted it. } ? 410

NEOPTOLEMUS

He was no more, my friend ; had he been living,
I never should have been so plundered.

PHILOCTETES

How?

What did you say? Is he too dead and gone?

NEOPTOLEMUS

He walks no more on earth.

PHILOCTETES

O woe is me !

But not the son of Tydeus ! Not that son
Of Sisyphus, palmed on Laertes ! They
Will not have died ! Pity they were ever born ! }

NEOPTOLEMUS

Not they, you may be certain ; they are now
Flourishing greatly in the Argive host. 420

PHILOCTETES

And what of him, old, valiant and my friend,
Nestor of Pylos? He was wont to avert
With wise advice the mischiefs of their hands.

NEOPTOLEMUS

Badly he fares, indeed ; since he has lost
Antilochus, a son of his, by death.

PHILOCTETES

Alas ! You tell me two calamities
In the same breath ! of two, who least of any
I could have wished to hear were dead ! Good lack,
What must we look to, when such men have perished,
The while Ulysses still survives ; whereas }

He and not they, ought rather to have been
Reported slain!

430

NEOPTOLEMUS

A clever gamester he.
But, Philoctetes! even clever plans
Are sometimes hindered.

PHILOCTETES

Tell me now, by Heaven,
Where did you leave Patroclus all this while,
Who was your father's darling?

NEOPTOLEMUS

He had died, too.
And, in short compass I may say to you—
War never slays a bad man in its course,
But the good always!

PHILOCTETES

I can bear you out.
And while we talk of it, I will enquire
After a man—worthless indeed, but shrewd
And apt of speech—what is become of him.

440

NEOPTOLEMUS

Who but Ulysses is it whom you mean?

PHILOCTETES

I did not speak of him; but there was one
Thersites, who was always trying to speak,
By no means only once—where none would have him;
Know you if he still lives?

NEOPTOLEMUS

I never saw him;
But I did hear that he is yet alive.

PHILOCTETES

He may well be so! Nothing ever died
That was pernicious; but the Deities
Foster it well; yea, they delight to turn

All that is profligate and villanous
 Backward from Hades, while the good and just 450
 They speed on their way ever. In what light
 Must we regard these things? how praise them? when
 Praising things heavenly, I find faults in Heaven!

NEOPTOLEMUS

I, O thou son of an Cētæan sire,
 Shall take good care henceforward to survey
 Ilium and the Atridæ from afar;
 And where the mean are mightier than the brave
 And goodness withers, and the coward bears rule,
 I never will approve such company;
 But rock-bound Scyros shall suffice for me
 In future, and contentment with my home. 460
 Now to my ship I go; farewell to thee,
 Thou son of Pœas; may you fare right well!
 And may the Powers restore you from disease
 According to your wish. Let us be going;
 That whensoever Heaven vouchsafes us means
 Of sailing, we may start.

PHILOCTETES

Already, son,

Are you afoot?

NEOPTOLEMUS

Yes, we must time our voyage
 By watching from hard by, not out of sight.

PHILOCTETES

Now for your sire's, your mother's sake, O son,
 And any dear one's whom you have at home,
 Suppliant I beg, leave me not here alone, 470
 Abandoned to such evils as you see,
 And all you have heard I dwell in! Stow me, say
 For ballast! The discomfort, well I know,
 Is much, of my affliction; bear it, though!
 To noble natures shame is odious; while
 Kindness brings honour. And to you, my son,

There were foul shame in leaving this undone ;
But in the doing the fullest meed of praise,
Should I come living to the Cætæan land.
Come now, the trouble will not last a day ; 480
Venture it ! Take me, throw me where you please,
Into the hold, into the bows, the stern,
Wherever I shall plague my mates the least !
Consent, my son, yea by prayer-answering Jove !
Hearken, I beseech you at your knees—although
A hapless wretch, being lame ; Ah, leave me not
Forsaken here, where is no trace of men !
But either take me safe to your own dwelling,
Or to Chalcodon's homesteads, in Eubœa ;
And thence to Ceta, and Cape Trachis, and 490
Sperchius' wide stream will not be far to go.
So shall you bring me to my father's arms,
For whom 'tis long that I have been afraid
He has already died ; for oftentimes
By those who have come did I send to him, with prayers
That he would send and fetch me safe again ;
But either he is dead, or I suppose
My emissaries, as is natural,
Making small count of what was due to me,
Pushed on their voyage home. But now—for you
I come to as conductor, equally, 500
And messenger yourself—pity me, and save me ;
Seeing how all risks await us, and to fare
Well or not well, as it may chance for us.
And to his risks one that is trouble-free
Should look, and, when he lives at ease, then chiefly
Watch, lest his life be ruined unawares.

Chorus

Have compassion, O my chief !
He has told of many a grief,
Many a painful care ;
Such load of woes
May none of those
Whom I cherish have to bear !

But if, sir king, thou hatest thus 510
 The bitter sons of Atreus,
 Hear what my sentence is;
 Change the bane
 Into gain,
 Bane they meant, to gain of his;
 To the home he longed for so,
 Swiftly embarking, let us go;
 Our ship is tight and yare;
 Thus would I
 In safety fly
 From the revenge the Gods prepare.

NEOPTOLEMUS

Take care you do not play at being kind
 Now, but as soon as you are overwhelmed 520
 By the proximity of his disease,
 No longer seem the same, as you now promise.

I SCYRIAN

No fear of that. It is impossible
 That you shall ever have this stone to cast,
 With right, at me.

NEOPTOLEMUS

Truly and it were dishonour
 That I should seem reluctant, more than you,
 In labour for a stranger at his need.
 Come then; if you think fit, let us set sail.
 Let him start quickly; for the ship shall take him,
 And none shall say him nay. Heaven only guide us
 Safe from this land, thither, where we would go!

PHILOCTETES

O day most happy! O most welcome face! 530
 O sailors dear! How shall I prove indeed
 What debt of gratitude you lay on me!
 Let us be going, my son; first taking leave
 Of the unhomelike home that is within,
 That you may learn what sort of life I lived,
 And what stout heart I kept. For I suppose
 No other beside me, seeing the sight

With his eyes, merely, would have borne it all ;
 While I was taught by long necessity
 To be resigned to ills.

I SCYRIAN

Stay, let us listen ;
 Two persons, one a sailor from your ship, 540
 And one a stranger, are approaching us ;
 Hear what they say before you go within.

Enter Attendant, disguised as a trading captain, and Mate.

ATTENDANT

Son of Achilles, this your shipmate, who
 With other two kept guard over your vessel,
 I bade inform me in what place you tarried,
 Since I have crossed you, not intending it,
 But by chance, somehow, having come to moor
 At the same ground. Sailing as shipmaster
 With a small convoy home from Ilion
 To Peparethus, famed for grape-clusters,
 When I had heard the sailors, one and all,
 Were of the crew that had embarked with you, 550
 I thought it better not to hold my tongue,
 Nor to make sail ere I had talked with you,
 And been rewarded, as is fair. Perhaps
 You have heard nothing of your own concerns—
 The new designs the Argives have on you?
 Nor mere designs, but deeds, now in the doing,
 No longer idled over.

NEOPTOLEMUS

Truly, sir,
 The merit of your forethought must secure
 My gratitude, if I am no churl born.
 But tell me what you mean ; that I may learn
 What last new scheme you know of from the host. 560

ATTENDANT

Old Phoenix and the sons of Theseus
 Are gone, with galleys, in pursuit of you.

NEOPTOLEMUS

To bring me back by parley, or perforce?

ATTENDANT

I know not. What I heard I come to tell you.

NEOPTOLEMUS

Is it for the Atridæ Phoenix and his mates
Are taking this in hand so hastily?

ATTENDANT

Be sure 'tis doing, and that without delay.

NEOPTOLEMUS

How was it Ulysses was not prompt to sail,
As his own post, in this? Did some fear stay him?)

ATTENDANT

He and the son of Tydeus were just starting 570
After another, when I put to sea.

NEOPTOLEMUS

Who could that be, for whom Ulysses' self
Would have embarked?

ATTENDANT

Well, he said—somebody;
But tell me first, who is this personage?
And do not speak out loud.

NEOPTOLEMUS

This, stranger, is
The famous Philoctetes!

ATTENDANT

Then don't ask me
Anything more, but with what speed you may
Take yourself off, out of this land, and sail.

PHILOCTETES

What says he, boy? Why does the shipman talk
Aside to you, making his trade of me?

NEOPTOLEMUS

I do not know as yet; what he would say 580
He must speak out to you, to these, and me.

ATTENDANT

Seed of Achilles, do not tell of me,
For saying what I ought not, to the host;
Many are the friendly acts they do to me,
And I to them, such as a poor man may.

NEOPTOLEMUS

I am the Atridæ's enemy; and he,
Hating the Atridæ, is my greatest friend.
If, as you say, you came to do me good,
No word you have heard must you conceal from us.

ATTENDANT

My son, mind what you are doing.

NEOPTOLEMUS

So I do.

ATTENDANT

I shall hold you accountable for this. 590

NEOPTOLEMUS

Do, but say on.

ATTENDANT

I will. The two you wot of,
The son of Tydeus and Ulysses, sail
To arrest this man; and they have sworn an oath
To bring him, either by persuading him
With oratory, or else by dint of force.
So all the Achaians heard Ulysses say
Openly; for he had full confidence,
More than the other, to accomplish it.

NEOPTOLEMUS

And for what cause did the Atridæ turn
At last so vehemently towards him
Whom all this while they had kept in banishment? 600

What remorse reached them, or what Nemesis
And force divine, wrestling with wickedness?

ATTENDANT

All this, for you perhaps have heard it not,
I will explain. There was a high-born seer,
A son of Priam's, Helenus by name,
Whom he we speak of, he we call—the knave—
By all disgraceful and vile epithets,
Ulysses—sallying forth by night, alone,
Captured, and bound; and brought him, and displayed
Amidst the Achaian ranks, a splendid prize!
Who gave them oracles of all beside, 610
And that they never would be conquerors
Of Troia's towers, unless they could persuade
And bring this person from the island, here,
Where he dwells now. This when Laertes' son
Heard the seer say, he undertook forthwith
To fetch the man to the Achaians' presence;
He rather thought, taking him willingly;
But if reluctant, then against his will;
Which if he failed of doing, he staked his head
To be cut off by any man who pleased!
My son, you have heard all; my counsel is, 620
For you and him and any other man
For whom you have regard, to lose no time.

PHILOCTETES

Me miserable! Did he, the utter pest,
Swear to cajole and fetch me to the host?
I am as likely to come up to light,
When dead, from Hades, as his father did!

ATTENDANT

Of that I know not. Now to my ship I go.
To the best ends may Heaven attend you both!

Exit.

PHILOCTETES

Is it not monstrous that Laertes' son
Should ever hope, boy, with soft soothing words

To take me, and to shew me from his vessel
To all the mob of Argives? He, than whom 630
I easier would hearken to the snake—
The abhorred snake, which has thus made me lame!
But there is nothing which he will not say,
Nothing he dares not do! And now, I know
That he will come; well, my son, let us go;
So that the billows may divide us from
Ulysses' vessel, far! Let us depart;
A timely haste is the right means to afford
Sleep and refreshment when the toil is past.

NEOPTOLEMUS

Were it not well, when the head-wind shall cease,
Then to set sail? for it is adverse now. 640

PHILOCTETES

Winds are fair always, when you fly from harm.

NEOPTOLEMUS

Nay but this gale is adverse to them also!

PHILOCTETES

There is no gale adverse to plunderers,
When robbery and rapine are in hand.

NEOPTOLEMUS

Well then, if it so please you, let us go;
And take, out of your dwelling, anything
For which you have most use, and most desire.

PHILOCTETES

Some things I need, though from a scanty store.

NEOPTOLEMUS

What is there, which is not on board my vessel?

PHILOCTETES

A herb I have, with which I always lull
This ulcer best, and soothe the pain away. 650

NEOPTOLEMUS

Well, bring it forth. What would you take beside?

PHILOCTETES

If any of my arrows have been dropped
Unheeded, that I should not leave them here
For any man to gather.

NEOPTOLEMUS

What, are those
The famous bow and arrows in your hand?

PHILOCTETES

These which I carry. There are none beside them.

NEOPTOLEMUS

May I look at them close, and handle them,
And do them worship, as a god?

PHILOCTETES

Both this,
My son, and anything besides of mine
Is at your service, which may profit you.

NEOPTOLEMUS

I have the longing; but no more than thus— 660
I would, an if I might; if not, no matter.

PHILOCTETES

Modestly spoken! Yes my son, that may you,
You who alone have given me to behold
This light of day—to see the Cætæan soil—
My aged sire—my friends! who set me up,
Being underneath, over my enemies!
You shall have leave to touch them and give back
At pleasure; and to boast that, for your merit,
You only of mortals ever handled them.
'Twas in return for kindness I first got them. 670

I SCYRIAN

To see you, and to have you for a friend,
Pleases me well; for he that knows the way
To return good for good, must be a friend
Better than all possessions.

NEOPTOLEMUS

Now go in.

PHILOCTETES

I will, and take you with me ; for my ailment
Craves to have you for an auxiliary.

*Exeunt PHILOCTETES and NEOPTOLEMUS.**Chorus*

I. 1.

I have heard the tale that was told—
I did not behold—
What by Cronos' invincible son
To Ixion was done,
Who approached Jove's bed, whom he bound
To a wheel whirled round; 680
But I know of no other, by hearing or seeing, that is,
No mortal, tied to a loathlier fate than his,
Who for no violent deed, or stain of fraud on his name,
But being as good as the good are, perishes here in shame.
At this, too, I wonder,
How, listening to the shock
Of the surges' thunder
About his lonely rock,
Still, still he endured the continual cares and fears
Of a life, all tears! 690

I. 2.

Where none but himself to greet—
No use of his feet—
Nor any neighbour he found,
Of the region round,
In whose compassionate ears
To bewail, with tears,
His raw deep-festered sore—who might stay the flood,
From the wounds of his raging foot, of the fevered blood,
With what soothing herbs, if any, to pluck from the teeming soil, 700
Appeared—for hither and thither, hobbling along with toil,
He would crawl, where healing
Might be found, for his journey's pain—
Like an infant feeling
For its nurse's arms in vain—
Whensoever the soul-consuming Fury's force
Had out-spent its course;

II. 1.

Raising no seed
 Out of the hallowed lap of earth, for food;
 Nor aught beside of good,
 Such as the cunning spirit achieves of men;
 But only now and then 710
 What he might hit, with arrows from the string
 Sped on swift wing
 His appetite to feed.
 Poor soul, that never in a ten years' space
 Revelled in one full draught of wine outpoured,
 But ever had to journey with set face
 To any standing pool he had explored!

II. 2.

But met withal
 Now by a child of warriors, his allies,
 He shall at length arise, 720
 Happy, out of woes, and magnified by them.
 Who with sea-traversing stem,
 The tale of many months being complete,
 Conducts his feet
 Back to his fathers' hall,
 Where dwell the Meliad Nymphs—and to the banks
 Of Sperchius; where, with fire of Heaven all-bright,
 The brazen-shielded Hero joins the ranks
 Of all the Gods, high o'er Mount Cæta's height.

Enter NEOPTOLEMUS *and* PHILOCTETES.

NEOPTOLEMUS

Move forward, if you will. Why, without reason, 730
 Are you so silent? Why stand thus aghast?

PHILOCTETES

Eh, eh!

NEOPTOLEMUS

What is it?

PHILOCTETES

Nothing serious. On, my son.

NEOPTOLEMUS

Are you in pain, from your unhealed disease?

PHILOCTETES

No, not at all; I think 'tis better now.
O Heavens!

NEOPTOLEMUS

Why do you groan, and call on Heaven?

PHILOCTETES

To come and save me, and be good to me.
Eh, eh!

NEOPTOLEMUS

What is the matter? Won't you tell me? 740
Must you be silent thus? You seem in pain.

PHILOCTETES

I am ruined, my son, and shall not have the power
To hide my anguish from you. Well a day!
It goes through me, it goes through me! Woe is me!
I am ruined, my son; I am gnawed, my son. Alack,
Alack the day! Alack, alack the day!
For Heaven's sake, if you have a sword, my son,
Ready to hand, smite me upon the foot,
Cut it off quickly! Spare not for my life!
Quick, boy! 750

NEOPTOLEMUS

What is it, suddenly arisen,
For which you moan so, and bewail yourself?

PHILOCTETES

You know, my son.

NEOPTOLEMUS

What is it?

PHILOCTETES

You know, boy!

NEOPTOLEMUS

What?

I know not!

PHILOCTETES

How, you know not? Lack, alack-a-day!

NEOPTOLEMUS

Truly the stress is dreadful of your sickness.

PHILOCTETES

Yes, dreadful beyond utterance; pity me!

NEOPTOLEMUS

What must I do?

PHILOCTETES

Do not betray me, in terror;

For it is come, after an interval,

By winding ways; the very same, it seems,

As it was gorged before.

NEOPTOLEMUS

Alas, poor wretch—

Wretch that you seem, truly, for all your troubles! 760

Would you I should touch you, and take hold of you?

PHILOCTETES

Not that, by any means; but take this bow,

As you were asking me but now, and keep

And guard it, till this spasm of my disease,

Now present, slackens. For sleep seizes me

After this agony has run its course;

It cannot end before; but you must leave me

To sleep in quiet. And if in the meanwhile

Those men arrive, I charge you in Heaven's name, 770

That neither freely nor against your will,

Nor any how, you suffer them to get it;

Lest you become the slayer of your own self,

And of me too, who am your supplicant.

NEOPTOLEMUS

Take heart; so far as care can hinder, it

Shall not be given, save to yourself and me.

Hand it to me, and luck go with it!

PHILOCTETES *giving the bow and arrows*

Here,
Take it, my son ; but adore, first, the Power
Whose name is Jealousy ; so may it prove
To thee not baneful, as it was to me,
And him, who was its owner ere my time.

NEOPTOLEMUS

Heaven grant it so to us ! and grant us, too,
A favourable and swift passage thither, 780
Where God ordains, and whither we are bound.

PHILOCTETES

Ah but I fear, my son, your prayers are vain ;
For here again is trickling the red blood,
Welling up from within, and I expect
Some change.—Alack, fie on it ! Alack again,
My foot, how you will hurt me ! It grows upon me ;
It comes on close. O wretched that I am !
You know the worst ; pray do not go away !
O well-a-day ! 790
Thou man of Cephallenia, would this pang
Could grip thy breast, right through thee ! Fie, alack !
Alack once more ! O you two generals,
Agamemnon and Menelaus, would that you
Might have this plague to bear, instead of me,
As long a time as I ! O me, woe's me !
O Death, kind Death, how is it that always called,
Thus, every day, thou canst not ever come ?
O youth, good youth, good now, take hold of me,
And burn me in that thrice welcome Lemnian flame, 800
As on a time unto Jove's offspring I,
Earning those weapons, which you carry now,
Thought it no sin to do ! What say you, son ?
What do you say ?
Why are you silent ? What are you about ?

NEOPTOLEMUS

Why, I was sighing with grief, at your distress.

PHILOCTETES

Nay my son, all the same, do not lose courage ;
For it comes sharply, and goes away with speed.
Only I entreat, do not abandon me !

NEOPTOLEMUS

Fear not, we will remain.

810

PHILOCTETES

Will you remain?

NEOPTOLEMUS

Be assured I will.

PHILOCTETES

I do not think it meet
To put you on your oath, my son.

NEOPTOLEMUS

Why no ;
Since I may not arrive without you !

PHILOCTETES

Reach
Your hand, for pledge.

NEOPTOLEMUS

I pledge it, to remain.

PHILOCTETES

Yonder now, yonder—

NEOPTOLEMUS

Whither say you ?

PHILOCTETES

Above—

NEOPTOLEMUS

What do you rave of now ? Why do you stare
At the orb above us ?

PHILOCTETES

Let me, let me go.

NEOPTOLEMUS

Let you go—whither?

PHILOCTETES

Let me be awhile.

NEOPTOLEMUS

Leave hold I will not.

PHILOCTETES

You will kill me, if

You touch me!

NEOPTOLEMUS

I quit hold then, if indeed

You have some better notion.

PHILOCTETES

Take me, Earth,

Dying as I am! for my infirmity

No longer lets me keep myself upright.

820

Throws himself on the ground.

NEOPTOLEMUS

It seems he will be fast asleep, ere long;

For see, his head sinks backward. How the sweat

Stands over all his frame! and a black vein

Has opened on the surface of his foot,

Discharging blood. Well, let us leave him, friends,

In quietness, till he has fallen asleep.

Chorus

Sleep, thou that know'st not pain,

That know'st not care,

Blest and twice blest again,

Come, with soft air!

Keep from his eyes this light,

830

Which overspreads our sight

Now, of the noonday bright;

Come, saviour fair!

I SCYRIAN

Look, my son; where standest thou?
 How wilt thou proceed?
 What shall be thy study now?
 Dost thou see, and heed?
 Wherefore are we lingering?
 Time, that settles everything,
 To our very feet doth bring
 Power for all our need.

NEOPTOLEMUS

He hears no sound, indeed; but this is plain,
 For us to have his weapons is no gain, 840
 Sailing without himself. Him God bade bring;
 His is the garland; and to boast in vain,
 And lie, and fail, is a disgraceful thing.

Chorus

God will provide a way;
 But as for thee,
 Low, low, my son, convey 850
 Thy words to me;
 For to all souls that weep,
 Stricken with sickness deep,
 Their sleep, which is not sleep,
 Is quick to see.

2 SCYRIAN

Now, so far as thou hast power,
 Stealthily, my son,
 This examine, this explore,
 How it shall be done:
 For—thou knowest whom I would name—
 If your counsels are the same,
 There awaits you bale and blame
 Your prudence cannot shun.

Chorus

The breeze blows fair, the breeze blows fair, my king;
 And without help, and without sight
 Stretched out he lies, as in the night,
 (Sleep is good, in the warm sun-light,) 860
 Powerless of hand and foot and everything!
 He sees not, looks not, answers not with speech,
 More than the dead who are beneath at rest;
 My son, so far as my poor thoughts can reach,
 The toil that has no risk is best.

NEOPTOLEMUS

Silence, keep calm, I tell you; for the man
Opens his eyes, and raises up his head.

PHILOCTETES

O daylight, that receivest me from sleep!
O sojourn unexpected of these strangers!
I never could have boasted, O my son,
That you would bear to abide my sufferings, 870
With such compassion staying here at my side
To afford help. Not so complacently
Did the Atridæ, our brave generals,
Bear to endure this plague! but, son of mine,
For noble is your nature and your birth,
You, though oppressed with noise and noisomeness,
Made light of all these ills! And now, my son,
Since of my torment there does seem to be
Some respite, some oblivion, raise me up
With your own hand; set me upon my feet;
So that, as soon as numbness gives me leave, 880
We may proceed on board, and straightway sail.

NEOPTOLEMUS

I am right glad to see you beyond hope
Awake and still alive and without pain;
For in the fit that was upon you here
Your symptoms were like those of a dead man.
But now stand up; or if you choose it, these
Shall carry you; for they will not grudge the trouble,
When you and I both choose to have it so.

PHILOCTETES

I thank you, son; raise me, as you are minded;
But let these be, lest they be overcome 890
Before they need, with noisomeness. Enough
The task for them, to live with me on board.

NEOPTOLEMUS

So be it. But stand upright and take fast hold.

PHILOCTETES

Fear not. The old exercise will straighten me.

NEOPTOLEMUS

Alack! What next, in the world, am I to do?

PHILOCTETES

What is it, boy? what were you going to say?

NEOPTOLEMUS

I do not know what way I ought to turn
My perplexed speech.

PHILOCTETES

But what perplexes you?

Do not talk thus, my son!

NEOPTOLEMUS

Only already

I have gone too far to help it.

PHILOCTETES

It is not

900

The offence of my disease induces you
Now to refuse to take me in your crew?

NEOPTOLEMUS

All is offence, when any man forsakes
His proper self, to do what fits him not.

PHILOCTETES

But you, in aiding a good man, do nothing,
Say nothing, to bely your parentage.

NEOPTOLEMUS

I shall be shamed. This is what weighs on me.

PHILOCTETES

Never, by what you are doing! What you say
Makes me afraid.

NEOPTOLEMUS

O Heavens, what shall I do?
Must I be proved twice base, both hiding that
I should not hide, and saying what is most shameful?

PHILOCTETES

If I am not a fool, this fellow seems 910
Like to betray me, leave me, and so set sail!

NEOPTOLEMUS

Leave you? Oh no! Rather what weighs on me
Is that I am conveying you, to your sorrow!

PHILOCTETES

What say you, son? I do not understand.

NEOPTOLEMUS

I will hide nothing from you; 'tis to Troy
You are to sail, to the Achaians, and
The Atridæ's fleet.

PHILOCTETES

Woe's me! what did you say?

NEOPTOLEMUS

Do not cry out, before you are informed—

PHILOCTETES

Informed! of what? What would you do to me?

NEOPTOLEMUS

First cure you of this disease, and afterwards,
Along with you, when I get there, storm Troy! 920

PHILOCTETES

And do you really mean to do it?

NEOPTOLEMUS

'Tis ruled

By strong Necessity; pray, be not angry!

PHILOCTETES

I am undone, unhappy ! I am betrayed !
O stranger-guest, what hast thou done to me?—
Give back my bow at once !

NEOPTOLEMUS

That cannot be ;

For justice and advantage both oblige me
To obey those in power.

PHILOCTETES

O thou fire !

Thou universal horror ! Masterpiece
Abominable, of monstrous villainy !
What hast thou done to me ? How hast thou cheated me !
Art not ashamed, O rogue, to look at me
Thy supplicant, me thy petitioner ? 930
Thou hast robbed me of my life, taking my bow.
Give it back, I beg thee ! Give it back, I pray !
By our father's gods, son, do not take my life !
Woe's me ! he does not even answer me !
His look replies, he never will give it me !—
You bays, you promontories, O you haunts
Of mountain brutes, O cliffs precipitous,
To you—for other hearers have I none—
Present, my old familiars, I appeal—
See how Achilles' son is wronging me ! 940
Swearing to take me home, to Troy he drags me ;
And pledging his right hand, he has obtained—
Relic of Jove-born Heracles—my bow,
Meaning in the Argives' sight to flourish it ;
Like some strong prisoner, by force he drags me,
And knows not he is killing a dead man,
A vapour's shadow, an unsubstantial shade !
For in full strength he never had captured me,
Since even thus he had not, save by guile ;
But now, unhappy, I have been deceived.
What must I do ? Nay, give it back to me ;
Nay, even yet, be thy true self once more ; 950

What say'st thou? Thou art dumb! I am lost, unhappy!
 O double-portal'd frontal of the rock,
 Back, once again, I come and enter thee,
 Bare, without means of life; but I shall starve
 Here, in the fields alone; not killing now
 Winged bird, or silvan quarry, with my bow,
 But I myself, wretched, when I am dead,
 Yielding a meal to things on which I fed.
 Creatures I chased before will now chase me;
 And I shall pay for bloodshed with my blood,
 By practice of a seeming innocent! 960
 O may'st thou perish!—not yet, until I know
 Whether thou wilt repent, and change thy purpose;
 But if thou wilt not, evil be thine end!

Enter ULYSSES, behind.

I SCYRIAN

What shall we do? For us to embark, sir king,
 Or yield to this man's prayers, now lies with you.

NEOPTOLEMUS

A strange compassion has come over me,
 Not now at first, but some time since, for him.

PHILOCTETES

Pity me, O boy, for Heaven's sake! Publish not
 Your own shame to the world, in cheating me!

NEOPTOLEMUS

O what am I to do? Would I had never
 Left Scyros! These things are so hard for me. 970

PHILOCTETES

You are not vile; but you have come, 'tis plain,
 Primed with disgraceful teaching, from the vile.
 Now take to other leaders, as is meet,
 And give me up my weapons, and set sail.

NEOPTOLEMUS

O men, what shall we do?

ULYSSES *advancing.*

What are you doing?

You wicked knave! Come back! Give me that bow!

PHILOCTETES

O who is this? Ulysses do I hear?

ULYSSES

Yes, to be sure, Ulysses; I am here.

PHILOCTETES

O, I am bought and sold! I am undone!

Then it was he who was my kidnapper,

Who robbed me of my weapons!

ULYSSES

Doubtless, I; 980

None else; that I avow.

PHILOCTETES

Give back my bow,

Give it me, boy!

ULYSSES

That shall he never do,

Even if he would. Now, you must march with these,

Or they shall force you.

PHILOCTETES

They—by force—take me,

O vilest and most impudent of men!

ULYSSES

If you will not go freely.

PHILOCTETES

O thou soil

Of Lemnos! O thou all-subduing flame

Lit by Hephæstus! Is it to be borne,

That he should force me from your borders?

ULYSSES

Zeus

It is, if you would know—Zeus, this land's master—
Zeus, who has willed these things. His servant I. 990

PHILOCTETES

Caitiff, what words dost thou devise to say?
Alleging Gods, thou makest thy gods liars!

ULYSSES

Not so, but faithful. You are bound to go.

PHILOCTETES

No.

ULYSSES

Yes, I say; you must obey me, here.

PHILOCTETES

Me miserable! my father, it appears,
Gat me no freeman, but a bond-slave!

ULYSSES

Nay,

Peer of the best, with whom it is your fate
To storm Troy's walls, and to demolish them.

PHILOCTETES

No never, even in extremity,
While this firm steep of earth remains to me. 1000

ULYSSES

What would you?

PHILOCTETES

Leap head foremost off the rock,
From the top to the bottom, and dash out my brains!

ULYSSES

Seize him! don't let him do it.

Philoctetes is seized.

PHILOCTETES

O you hands,
How are you abused, for lack of your old string,

Made prisoners by this fellow! Thou, whose thoughts
Are nowise wholesome, nowise generous,
How hast thou supplanted me! How hast thou stalked me!
Employing as a cover for thyself
This youth, unknown to me, unmeet for thee,
But meet, indeed, for me; who nothing knew, 1010
Save to perform what was commanded him,
And even now is manifestly distressed
At his own errors, and my sufferings.
But thy base soul, peering through crannies ever,
Well, although simple and without his will,
Instructed him in evil, to be wise.
And now thou think'st to bind and carry me,
Wretch! from this beach, on which thou didst expose me
Friendless, forsaken, homeless, a dead corpse
Among the living. Ah, perdition on thee!
Not seldom have I prayed that prayer for thee.
But—for the Gods allot me no good fortune— 1020
Thou livest to rejoice, and I to grieve
At this same thing, that amid many ills
I live, unhappy, laughed to scorn by thee,
And the two captains, sons of Atreus,
Of whom, in this, thou art the minister.
Yet thou through trickery and by force constrained
Did'st sail with them; while I, thrice miserable,
Who volunteered, and brought seven ships with me,
Dishonoured am cast out—by them, thou sayest—
They say by thee! And now, why do you hale me?
Why carry me away? To what end? Me,
Who nothing am, and am long dead, to you? 1030
Abhorred of Heaven! How is it I am not now
Lame, and of evil savour? If I sail with you,
How will you manage to burn sacrifices
And pour libations any more to Heaven?
It was your pretext, in extruding me.
Perdition overwhelm you! As it will,
If Gods love justice, for your wrongs to me.
And I am sure they do; for never else
Would you have sailed after a beggar thus;

But some remorse on my account, from Heaven,
 Goaded you on. But O my native land, 1040
 And you, regarding Gods! sooner or late,
 If you have any pity left for me,
 Grant vengeance, vengeance, vengeance on them all!
 Miserable indeed I am; but I should feel
 Cured of my plague, if I could see their fall!

I SCYRIAN

Ulysses, sorely angered is the man;
 And sore the word which he has uttered here,
 And unsubmissive to adversity.

ULYSSES

I might say much in answer, had I time;
 Now, I am master of one thing to say:
 Where such-an-one is needed, such am I!
 Where there is trial who is just, who brave, 1050
 You would not find one worthier than I am.
 Indeed by nature I am covetous
 Of success everywhere; but not with you;
 Now, willingly, I will give place to you;
 Yes, let him go; do not keep hold of him;
 Let him stay here. We have no use for you,
 Now we have got these arrows; for Teucer is
 Among us, who has learnt this mystery;
 And I, too, think that I can draw the string
 And point the arrow just as well as you.
 What need of you, then? To your heart's content 1060
 Pace Lemnos up and down! But let us go;
 And your own prize, it may be, shall confer
 Honour on me, which was by rights your own.

PHILOCTETES

What shall I do? Alas, shall you be seen
 Graced with my arms among the Argives?

ULYSSES

Nay,
 Make me no answer; I am going, I say.

PHILOCTETES

Seed of Achilles, will you go away
Thus? Shall I never hear your accents more?

ULYSSES

Do you go forward. Never look at him,
Stout though you are, lest you should spoil our luck.

PHILOCTETES

O sirs, shall I be left here desolate 1070
By you as well? Will not you pity me?

I SCYRIAN

Our captain is this youth; all that he tells you,
That we say also.

NEOPTOLEMUS

By Ulysses here
I shall be told that I am pitiful;
Nevertheless, if this man wishes it,
Until the crew have got the ship's gear ready,
And we have offered up our prayers to Heaven,
Tarry; meantime, perhaps he may take thought
More kindly on us. We twain, for our part, hasten;
Do you make haste to follow, when we call. 1080

Exeunt ULYSSES and NEOPTOLEMUS.

I. 1.

PHILOCTETES

O rock-hewn cavern hollowed high,
Sultry or icy-chill,
Not mine, alas, from thee to fly,
Not while I live; but though I die
Thou wilt be near me still.
O woe for me! O wretched lair,
Filled to the full with my despair!
What now shall be my day's supply?
Where shall I seek for store? 1090
O that the flutterers of the sky
Might whirl me through the whistling air!
I can endure no more.

Chorus

Surely thyself, thyself would have it so,
 O victim of the curse!
 Not from without, not from a stronger foe
 Doth this mischance arise,
 When, having it in thy power to be wise,
 Thou turnest from the better lot to what is worse! 1100

I. 2.

PHILOCTETES

O wretched—wretched and with pain
 Oppressed, unhappy I,
 Who, without hope to meet again
 The face of man, must here remain
 In the same place, and die!
 Woe—woe! not adding to my store—
 Not with my winged shafts, any more,
 That flew so sure and strong, 1110
 But by dark words I could not scan
 Foully beguiled! O might the man
 Who was the framer of this plan
 Endure my woes as long!

Chorus

Destiny, destiny brought thee to this end,
 Sent by the powers divine;
 Thou wert defrauded by no hand of mine;
 Keep thou for others, friend,
 Thy bitter boding curse, lest thou repel 1120
 Friendship; for what thou art saying touches me as well.

II. 1.

PHILOCTETES

Somewhere now, seated by the sea
 Upon the foam-white strand,
 He mocks at me—Ah woe is me!
 And tosses in his hand
 That which procured me food before—
 That, which no stranger ever bore.
 O bow of mine, from hands of mine
 Ravished—how pityingly,
 Surely, thou must thy gaze incline— 1130
 If thou hast sense—toward me,
 The friend of Heracles of yore,
 That shall not wield thee any more!

Now thou art handled in my place
 By a right cunning lord,
 And viewest his deceits how base,
 And him, the foe abhorred,
 Who by his baseness brings to be
 The thousand ills Jove planned for me.

Chorus

He acts a manly part
 Who justifies whatever makes for gain, 1140
 And, while so doing, refrains to dart
 A tongue of envy forth, to inflict pain.
 Chosen out of many for the task, our king,
 In following the behest
 Of him you speak of, was accomplishing
 Succour for all the rest.

II. 2.

PHILOCTETES

Come hither you wild winged brood,
 And tribes of fierce-eyed beasts,
 Who on these mountains seek your food,
 Whom this lone island feasts;
 No longer scurry from my door;
 I have lost the shafts I shot before. 1150
 Alas for my unhappy lot!
 No longer need you fear;
 Weak is the watch that guards this spot;
 Now is your time! Draw near,
 Avenge you, glut you, freely dine
 On this infected flesh of mine!
 My breath of life is almost spent;
 Whence shall I get me bread? 1160
 What mortal can find nourishment
 Merely by breezes fed,
 Without the power to touch a thing
 That from the teeming earth may spring?

Chorus

If thou at all hold dear
 The name of friend, prithee, in all good will
 Suffer a comrade to draw near;
 Learn, and learn well, 'tis not beyond thy skill
 To drive away this worst of destinies,
 So piteous to sustain,
 So weak to endure the myriad miseries
 That follow in its train,

III.

PHILOCTETES

Again, again

Thou dost remind me of mine ancient pain,

O best of all who have been here as yet!

1170

Ah, why would'st thou undo me?

Oh what hast thou done to me?

I SCYRIAN

Why say'st thou this?

PHILOCTETES

Because thy hopes are set

On carrying me to that same Trojan land

Which I detest!

I SCYRIAN

Yea, for I think that best.

PHILOCTETES

Begone at once! Leave me behind!

I SCYRIAN

Welcome, right welcome to me is this command,

Which I right gladly obey.

Away, away,

Let us aboard, each to his place assigned.

1180

PHILOCTETES

For God's sake, I adjure you, leave me not!

Nay I beseech you!

I SCYRIAN

Soft!

PHILOCTETES

O strangers, stay,

In Heaven's name!

I SCYRIAN

What

Criest thou?

PHILOCTETES

Alas, destiny, destiny!

O foot, my foot, what shall I do with thee

In all my after life? O woe is me!

O strangers, come, come back, come back again!

1190

I SCYRIAN

To do what—with intent
Other than that thou didst at first present?

PHILOCTETES

Let it not give offence
That reeling under a tempestuous pain
I cry aloud, words without sense!

IV.

I SCYRIAN

Come, poor sufferer, as we counsel thee.

PHILOCTETES

Never, never, know it for certainty!
Not though he, whose hand
Wields the lightning brand,
With its meteor rays
Should set me all ablaze!
Down with Troy—with all
Those beneath its wall—
All who had the heart
To banish far apart
This limb—this foot of mine!
But O my friends, incline
One prayer, but one, to grant!

1200

I SCYRIAN

What is it that you want?

PHILOCTETES

Hand me, if you have it, here
A sword, an axe, or spear.

I SCYRIAN

What do you mean to do?

PHILOCTETES

Cut body and limbs in two.
Death—death is my desire.

I SCYRIAN

Wherefore?

1210

PHILOCTETES

Seeking my sire.

I SCYRIAN

Where, on earth?

PHILOCTETES

In the grave.

For now no more, I know,

Lives he beneath the sun.—

O city, O native city,

How shall I see thee, I, the man they pity,

Who left thy sacred wave,

And went as aider to the Danaan foe?

—My days are done.

Retires.

I SCYRIAN

I should have been, by this, a good while since,

Arriving at my ship; had I not seen

1220

Ulysses coming, and Achilles' son

Drawing nigh toward us.

Enter ULYSSES and NEOPTOLEMUS.

ULYSSES

Will you not declare

Upon what errand you are creeping back

Hastening so eagerly?

NEOPTOLEMUS

Yes, to undo

The wrong I did before.

ULYSSES

Monstrous! What wrong?

NEOPTOLEMUS

That at your word and the whole host's—

ULYSSES

You did

A deed—of what kind, unbecoming you?

NEOPTOLEMUS

Catching a man by shameful frauds and tricks—

ULYSSES

What man? O Heavens! have you some new design—

NEOPTOLEMUS

No, nothing new; to Pœas' offspring, though— 1230

ULYSSES

What will you do? Truly I am afraid—

NEOPTOLEMUS

From whom I had these weapons, back once more—

ULYSSES

O Zeus, what will you say? You do not mean,
Surely, to give them?

NEOPTOLEMUS

Yes, for shamefully
And against justice I got hold of them.

ULYSSES

'Fore Heaven, do you say this to outrage me?

NEOPTOLEMUS

If to speak truth is outrage?

ULYSSES

What is this,
Achilles' son? What have you said?

NEOPTOLEMUS

Desire you
I should repeat the same words twice and thrice?

ULYSSES

I should have wished to hear them not at all!

NEOPTOLEMUS

Be well assured, you have heard me out. 1240

ULYSSES

There is—
There is a man shall stop your doing so.

NEOPTOLEMUS

What !

Who is there who will stop my doing it ?

ULYSSES

All

The whole Achaian people, I for one.

NEOPTOLEMUS

Wise as you are, you utter nothing wise.

ULYSSES

You neither say nor seek to do things wise.

NEOPTOLEMUS

If acts are just, they are better than if wise.

ULYSSES

How just—what by my counsels you obtained,
That to surrender back ?

NEOPTOLEMUS

The sin I sinned
'To my own shame, I will essay to mend.

ULYSSES

And in so doing not fear the Achaian host ?

1250

NEOPTOLEMUS

Being in the right, I quail not at your menace.
It is no force of yours which I obey,
Thus acting.

ULYSSES

Not the Trojans, then, but you
Will I assail in fight !

NEOPTOLEMUS

Come what come may !

ULYSSES

See you this right hand fingering at the hilt ?

NEOPTOLEMUS

Ay? You will find me playing at that same game,
And ready, too!

ULYSSES

Nay, I will let you be.
Rather I will depart and tell the tale
To the whole army, which shall punish you. *Retires.*

NEOPTOLEMUS

You are discreet; and if you prove as wise
Always, perhaps you will escape scot-free— 1260
Thou son of Pœas, Philoctetes! Ho!
Come out, and leave this rock-built tenement!

PHILOCTETES *within.*

What new alarm is thundering at my cave?
What would you, sirs? Why do you call me forth?

Entering.

Ha, 'tis ill done! Are you not come to add
Some heavy suffering to my sufferings?

NEOPTOLEMUS

Fear nothing; hear the words I am come to say.

PHILOCTETES

I am afraid; I trusted you before,
And through fair words fared foully.

NEOPTOLEMUS

Is it not
Within the bounds, that one may turn again? 1270

PHILOCTETES

Just such you were when you purloined my weapons,
In language honest, secretly my bane.

NEOPTOLEMUS

But not so now. Still, I would hear from you
Whether you are minded to persist in staying,
Or to set sail with us.

PHILOCTETES

Stop, speak no further ;
For all that you can say will be in vain.

NEOPTOLEMUS

So resolved are you ?

PHILOCTETES

As I say, and more so.

NEOPTOLEMUS

I wish you would have hearkened to my words ;
But if I am not speaking seasonably,
I have done.

1280

PHILOCTETES

Yes, all you say will be in vain ;
For you shall never find me favourable,
Who have by guile deprived me of my bow,
And after, come to give advice to me—
Offspring most vile, of a most worthy sire !
Destruction seize you all ! the Atridæ first,
Next Lartius' son, and thee !

NEOPTOLEMUS

Curse us no more,
But come and take your weapons from my hand.

PHILOCTETES

What? Am I being beguiled a second time?

NEOPTOLEMUS

The holy majesty of Jove most high
Bear witness—no !

PHILOCTETES

O sayer of sweetest things—
If you speak truth !

1290

NEOPTOLEMUS *giving the bow and arrows.*

The deed shall testify.
Stretch out your hand, and repossess your weapons.

ULYSSES *advancing.*

In the Atridæ's name, and the whole host's,
That I forbid! Be the Gods witnesses!

PHILOCTETES

Whose voice—was it Ulysses'—that I heard,
My son?

ULYSSES

Doubt it not! and you see me ready
To pack you off, by force, to Troia's shores,
Whether Achilles' son chooses, or no.

PHILOCTETES

At your cost be it, unless this dart go wrong!

NEOPTOLEMUS

Nay, by no means! For Heaven's sake do not shoot! 1300

PHILOCTETES

Let go my hand, dear boy, for Heaven's sake!

NEOPTOLEMUS

I will not.

No,
Exit ULYSSES.

PHILOCTETES

Oh why did you frustrate me
In slaying an adversary and enemy
With my own shafts?

NEOPTOLEMUS

Because 'twere honourable
For neither you nor me.

PHILOCTETES

Of this, at least,
Be certain; that the army's foremost men,
The falsehood-mongers of the Achaian host,
Are brave at words, but cowards at the steel!

NEOPTOLEMUS

So be it. You have your bow, and need not, now,
Feel indignation or despite at me.

PHILOCTETES

Yes, you have shewn the nature, O my child, 1310
From which you sprang; no son of Sisyphus,
But of Achilles, who was praised the most
Among the living, when he was alive,
And is, among the dead.

NEOPTOLEMUS

It pleases me
That you should praise my father, and myself;
Still, hear what I would have you do for me;
There is necessity for men to endure
The fortunes given from Heaven; but whosoe'er
Lies under voluntary miseries,
As you do, it is right that none on such
Should bestow pardon, or should pity them. 1320
But you are savage, and reject advice,
If a man warn you kindly; deeming him,
For very hate, an adversary and foe.
Yet I will speak, yea, and by Zeus I swear it;
And know this well, and write it on your heart;
I tell you, you are sick of this disease
By Heaven's decree, for coming near the guard
Who watches over the hypæthral close
Of Chrysa—the concealed snake-sentinel;
And you shall never find a cure, be certain,
Of your sore malady, while the same sun 1330
Rises on this side and on that goes down,
Till of your own will you shall come to Troy,
And meet Asclepius' sons, who are in our ranks,
And so be lightened of your plague, and then
With these your arrows, and with me to aid,
Conquer the city's towers before them all!
How do I know all this? Why, I will tell you;
There is a man of Troy prisoner to us,

Helenus, a seer of seers ; and he says plainly
That these things so must be ; and furthermore
That it is doomed, by the next harvest-time, 1340
All Troy should fall ; else, if he lies in this,
He is willing to pay forfeit by his death.
Now you know all, choose to agree with us !
For honourable is the accruing gain,
If you, being singled out for the Greeks' champion,
At once put hand upon a cure, and gain
Praise in the highest, by the storm of Troy,
That city of many woes !

PHILOCTETES

Detested life !

Why dost thou hold me above ground, yet seeing,
And wilt not let me go down to the grave ?
Alas, what shall I do ? How can I be 1350
Deaf to his words, my friendly counsellor ?
Am I to yield, then ? How, an if I do,
Shall I go forth—wretch—in the face of day ?
With whom shall I consort ? How, O you eyes
That behold all things which encircle me,
Will you endure my having fellowship
With Atreus' offspring, who destroyed me ? How
With the pernicious son of Lartius ?
For it is not the pain of what is past
That galls me ; but I fancy I foresee
What at their hands I needs must yet endure.
For those who have begotten evil deeds 1360
Of their own minds, are by their own minds trained
In all things else to evil. And in this
I am surprised at you ; for it was right
That you yourself never should be going to Troy,
Nay, should keep me away ; and, for the men
Who wronged you, spoiling you of your father's treasure,
Who judged the unhappy Ajax not so worthy
Of your sire's weapons, as Ulysses—what !
Will you join league with them, and force me to it ?
Not so, my son ! but as you sware to me,

Carry me home, and stay in Scyros, and
 Let them die miserably, in misery!
 So will you gain a twofold gratitude, 1370
 From me and from my father, and not come,
 Through helping villains, to resemble them.

NEOPTOLEMUS

All that you say is fair; still, I desire
 That trusting to the Gods, and to my story,
 You would consent to sail, and leave this land,
 Under my friendly convoy.

PHILOCTETES

What, to Troy?
 To the detested son of Atreus?
 With this unlucky foot?

NEOPTOLEMUS

Rather, to those
 Who shall relieve you and this ulcerous limb
 From torment, and redeem you from disease.

PHILOCTETES

O sayer of strange things, what words are these? 1380

NEOPTOLEMUS

What will end well, I know, for both of us.

PHILOCTETES

And in saying this have you no dread of Heaven?

NEOPTOLEMUS

What dread should a man have, of profiting?

PHILOCTETES

Profit to me, or the Atridæ?

NEOPTOLEMUS

Why

To you; being friendly, and my advice the same.

PHILOCTETES

Friendly, and want to give me to my foes?

NEOPTOLEMUS

O sir, learn to be prudent, in your troubles.

PHILOCTETES

I know you; you will ruin me, by your counsel.

NEOPTOLEMUS

I shall not; but I say, you grow no wiser.

PHILOCTETES

Do I not know the Atridæ cast me out? 1390

NEOPTOLEMUS

But how if they will bring you safely back?

PHILOCTETES

To behold Troy? Never, with my good will!

NEOPTOLEMUS

Then what is to be done, if I in talk
Cannot persuade you anything I say?
'Twere easiest I should cease from words, and you
Live on, as now, without deliverance.

PHILOCTETES

Leave me to suffer that which I must suffer.
But what you agreed, holding my hand, to do—
To send me home—this, my son, do, I pray you;
And do not linger, or take further thought 1400
On Troy; Troy has made sorrow enough for me.

NEOPTOLEMUS

If you will, let us be going.

PHILOCTETES

O well said, at length!

NEOPTOLEMUS

Lean on me as you are walking.

PHILOCTETES

Yea, with all my strength.

NEOPTOLEMUS

But how shall I avoid the Greeks' anger?

PHILOCTETES

Never care!

NEOPTOLEMUS

What if they lay waste my country?

PHILOCTETES

Shall not I be there?

NEOPTOLEMUS

What assistance will you bring us?

PHILOCTETES

With Heracles' bow—

NEOPTOLEMUS

How say you?

PHILOCTETES

I will repulse them.

NEOPTOLEMUS

Kiss the ground, and go.

Enter HERACLES, above.

HERACLES

Nay, not yet; first hear my precepts,
 Child of Pœas! It is thy privilege
 Thou should'st list to Alcides' accents,
 Thou should'st see him! I come, forsaking
 Seats ethereal, for thy benefit,
 Merely to tell thee Jove's high counsel,
 Merely to hinder
 That mad course thou followest. Do thou
 Give good heed to the words I say.—

1410

And first I will inform thee of my fortunes,
 How after all my labours past and done

I have attained to immortality, 1420
As thou may'st witness. And thyself, be sure,
Must go through this experience, and so make,
Out of thy labours, thy life glorious.
Go with this man to Troy; there first of all
Thou shalt be healed of pitiful disease,
And, chosen the first in prowess of the host,
Shalt deprive Paris, who was the primal cause
Of all these evils, with my shafts, of life,
And shalt take Troy, and gain the foremost prize
Of the whole host, and send unto thy halls
The booty, to thy father, Pœas, in 1430
Thy country, Ceta's vale. And all the spoil
That host shall give thee, in acknowledgment
Of my bow's work, bring to my funeral pyre.
—You too, son of Achilles, I exhort;
For neither have you power to capture Troy
Without his aid, nor he apart from you;
But like two lions ranging side by side
Each be the other's guard.

To PHILOCTETES.

—Lo, I will send
Asclepius to Troy, to cure your sickness;
For needs must Ilium yet a second time
Fall by my arrows. But remember well, 1440
When you lay waste the land, to have respect
Toward the Gods; for all things else to this
Stand second in the estimation of
Our Father, Jove. The praise of piety
Cleaves to a mortal in his hour of death,
Nor perishes, whether he die or live.

PHILOCTETES

O utterer of a long-sought oracle,
Revealed, though late, to sight, unto thy precepts
I will not be rebellious.

NEOPTOLEMUS

No, nor I.

HERACLES

No longer, then, delay to accomplish them;
 Time and the wind astern urge you to sail. 1450
Disappears.

PHILOCTETES

One greeting to the country, ere I go.

Farewell to the old familiar cave,
 To the roaring bass of the breaking wave
 And the Naiads of the dale!
 Where many a time my hair was wet,
 Deep in the inmost nook beset,
 Lashed by a southern gale!

Where often the voice of my lament
 Amid the storm was backward sent, 1460
 Echoed from Hermes' brow;
 O springs, with your liquid Lycian freight,
 Never expecting a joy so great,
 I leave you—I leave you now!

Farewell to the sea-girt Lemnian land!
 Give us good convoy from the strand,
 Where friendly counsels lead,
 And the prevailing word of Doom,
 And that all-mastering Power, by whom
 These issues were decreed.

Chorus

All together on our way
 Let us to the Sea Nymphs pray 1470
 To prosper our return this day.

Exeunt omnes.

NOTES.

22. I suppose *ἔχει πρὸς* to mean "have relation to," and the subject of the sentence, *αὐτός*, to be the description just given; which is not clearly distinguished from the locality itself, the object of *προσελθὼν*, because Ulysses is pretty sure he has hit the place.

29. I adopt Bergk's excellent conjecture, *οὔδεις*.

79. Dindorf's emendation, *παῖ*, seems no improvement.

110. I read *λακεῖν*, not *λαλεῖν*.

178. *μέτριος*, "moderate," that is to say in regard to misfortunes.

187. Sophocles has here coined a striking epithet, for which Shakespeare supplies me with a substitute. Compare Milton's "inexpressive nuptial-song."

314, 321, 592. The word *βία* having come to mean "violence," since Homer's time, when *βίη* only meant "might," Sophocles I think uses it here in Homeric form, but with Attic meaning. Compare his use of Homeric epithets, *El.* 746, *Trach.* 327.

425. I do not follow Dindorf in adopting Hermann's correction, *ὅς παρῆν, γόνος*.

431. The old English word "gamester," for a wrestler, exactly expresses *παλαιστής* in this context.

492. In following Pope, who shortens the quantity of Classical proper names, whenever by so doing he can throw back an accent, I believe that I am conforming to the genius of the English language. But inasmuch as a contrary practice is now fashionable, I submit these considerations; first, *Sperchius*, with the *i* accented, makes a line unreadable at sight by an English reader; next *Spercheios* is a combination of letters too exotic for use in English literature; thirdly *Spercheius* is neither Greek nor English.

631. Read *οὐ θαῶσσαν*, as Wunder.

642. Dindorf's change of *οὔκ* to *οὔδ'* seems unnecessary.

671. The ascription to the Chorus of this speech, the authenticity of which, as a part of the speech of Philoctetes, or of Neoptolemus, has been challenged, appears to me fully to meet any difficulty arising from its inconsecutiveness.

692. I have followed the interpretation which, since Lessing, has usually been assigned to *κακογείτονα*. But I do not see how the word can mean "a neighbour to his misfortunes"; and I trust a better solution may hereafter be discovered.

758. I follow the MSS. reading, not Dindorf.

776. I have borrowed a turn of phrase in this line from Dean Plumptre's translation.

827. I adopt Professor Campbell's suggestion for the distribution of the stanzas of this Ode between the personages of the Chorus.

862. I follow the MSS. reading, not Dindorf. Similarly in the next line, *ἐμῶ*.

940. This is one of those passages in which the Greek Aorist must be translated by a Present. Another has been pointed out to me in *O. T.* 1003. It is, of course, always better to avoid the English Perfect, if possible, in rendering a Greek Aorist. Compare l. 1259.

1139. Read *κάκ' ἐμήσατο Ζεὺς*.

1363. There was plenty of opportunity, during the interlude ll. 676—729, for Neoptolemus to tell Philoctetes the particulars of the death of Ajax.

1443. *Εὐσέβεια* here is the praise of piety, like *ἀρετὴ* l. 1420. *συνθνήσκει* is "accompanies into the realm of Thanatos."

1455. *κτύπος ἄρσην* is the same with *ἀρσένων κλαγγά*, *Trach.* 207; in English the "bass" voice of manhood.

OEDIPUS COLONEUS

OEDIPUS COLONEUS

PERSONS REPRESENTED

ŒDIPUS.

ANTIGONE } *his daughters.*
ISMENE }

THESEUS, *king of Athens.*

CREON.

POLYNICES, *son to Œdipus.*

A Stranger, an inhabitant of Colonus.

A Messenger, an Athenian attending on Theseus.

The CHORUS is composed of citizens of Colonus.

Guards attending on Theseus and Creon.

An attendant following Ismene.

OEDIPUS COLONEUS

Scene, Colonus, before the Sacred Grove of the Erinyes.

Enter ŒDIPUS and ANTIGONE.

ŒDIPUS

Antigone, child of a blind old man,
What lands are these, or what the folk, whose gates
We have attained? Who shall receive to-day
With stinted alms the wanderer, Œdipus?—
Asking but little; than that little, still
Obtaining less; and yet enough for me.
For my afflictions, and the weight of years,
And something more of my own dignity
Teach me contentment. If you see, my child,
Some resting-place, either by sacred grove 10
Or secular dwelling, stay me, and set me down,
That we may find out in what place we are;
For strangers from inhabitants to learn
We are come hither; and what we hear, to do.

ANTIGONE

Towers are there, O my father, Œdipus,
Covering a city, I perceive, afar;
This place, as I suppose, is consecrate;
It blooms with laurel, olive, and the vine;
Thick-flying nightingales within it warble;
Here stretch thy limbs, upon this rough-hewn stone; 20
For thou art aged, to have come so far.

ŒDIPUS

Seat me, and guard me still; for I am blind.

ANTIGONE

I know—that is an old tale—tell not me.

ŒDIPUS

Well, can you teach me whither we are come?

ANTIGONE

To Athens, that I know; but not the quarter.

ŒDIPUS

So much we heard from every passenger.

ANTIGONE

But shall I go and ask what place it is?

ŒDIPUS

Why yes, my child; if it seems hospitable.

ANTIGONE

O yes, there are some dwellings.—There's no need,
I think: for here's a man, I see, close to us.

30

ŒDIPUS

What, moving, and approaching hitherward?

ANTIGONE

Yes, here, I mean, at hand. Say what is needful;
This is the man.

Enter a Stranger, an inhabitant of Colonus.

ŒDIPUS

Stranger, this maiden tells me
(Whose eyesight serves both for herself and me)
Of your approach, an apt intelligencer
Of things we cannot guess—

STRANGER

Ere you ask further,
Come from that seat; you trespass on a place
No foot may violate.

ŒDIPUS

What is the place?
To what God dedicated?

STRANGER

It is kept
From touch or dwelling: the dread Goddesses 40
Inhabit it, daughters of Earth and Gloom.

ŒDIPUS

Who? By what solemn name denominate
Might I invoke them?

STRANGER

By the natives here
They would be called the All-seeing Favourers;
Other fit names elsewhere.

ŒDIPUS

May they receive
With mercy me, their supplicant; and I
From this land's harbour will go forth no more!

STRANGER

What does this mean?

ŒDIPUS

'Tis my misfortunes' weird.

STRANGER

Truly I dare not turn him out of it
Without the people—before telling them.

ŒDIPUS

Stranger, in Heaven's name do not cheat me—me,
A wanderer—of the word I crave of you! 50

STRANGER

Explain, and I will never cheat you.

ŒDIPUS

What
Is the ground called we have been treading on?

STRANGER

You shall hear all I know. First, the whole place is holy,
Inhabited by dread Poseidon; next,
The Deity that brought fire abides in it,
Titan Prometheus; and the spot you press
Is called the Brass-paved Causeway of this land—
The Athenian Rampart; the adjoining farms
Boast that Colonus mounted on his horse
Stands their chief patron here; and the whole people 60
Are called by and in common bear his name.
These are the facts, sir stranger; honoured not
In story, but more cherished on the spot.

ŒDIPUS

Did you say any men lived hereabouts?

STRANGER

Yes truly, and that they bear this Hero's name.

ŒDIPUS

Have they a chief, or is it with the people
To give the law?

STRANGER

These parts lie in the rule
Of the king of the City.

ŒDIPUS

Who is he, whose word
And sceptre sway them?

STRANGER

Theseus is his name,
Old Ægeus' son.

ŒDIPUS

Would one of you go fetch him? 70

STRANGER

What should one tell or move him to come here for?

ŒDIPUS

Say, to gain much, by a small act of kindness.

STRANGER

And where's the service in a man that's blind?

ŒDIPUS

There will be eyes in all that I shall say.

STRANGER

Come, this you may, sir, and without offence;
(Since you are worshipful to look upon,
Saving God's hand;) stay there, where I first found you,
While I go tell this to the burghers round,
(Here, not in the city;) they will soon decide
If you shall tarry, or depart once more.

80

Exit.

ŒDIPUS

My daughter, has the stranger gone away?

ANTIGONE

Yes, he has gone. You may say anything
Securely, father; none are here but I.

ŒDIPUS

Queens, with stern faces! since of all this land
First in your sanctuary I seated me,
To Phoebus, as to me, be not unfriendly,
Who, prophesying of those many ills,
Spake of this respite for me at the last,
That coming in the end unto a land
Where I should find asylum, at the hands
Of awful Powers, and hospitality,
There I should round the goal of my life-sorrow,
There dwell, a blessing to my hosts—a curse
To those who sent me into banishment;
And promised me a sign of this to come,

90

Earthquake—or thunder—or Jove's lightning, then.
 Now I perceive it is from none but you,
 The faithful omen that has wafted me
 Through all my journeying hither to this grove.
 Else I should never in my wayfaring
 Have met you first so fitly—strangers, you,
 To wine, as I am—or have taken seat 100
 On this dread threshold, this ungraven stone.
 Now therefore, Goddesses, bestow on me,
 According to Apollo's oracles,
 Some quick decease and finish of my life;
 If I appear not still unperfected
 In my continual servitude of toils,
 The extremest mortals know. Come, you kind daughters
 Of ancient Gloom! Come, thou that bear'st the name
 Of mightiest Pallas, Athens, first of cities,
 Have pity upon this miserable ghost
 Of what was Œdipus! He is not now
 Such as of old. 110

ANTIGONE

Hush! there are people coming,
 Elders in years, who note you, where you sit.

ŒDIPUS

I will be silent; and do you conceal me
 Apart within the grove, till I may learn
 What language these men hold; for in the knowledge
 Prudence consists for what we have to do.

ŒDIPUS and ANTIGONE retire.

Enter Citizens of Colonus, as Chorus.

Chorus

Look! Who was it? Where abides he?
 In what nook or corner hides he—
 Of all men—of all mankind the most presuming? 120
 Search about. Spy him, there!
 Seek him out everywhere.
 A vagrant—some vagrant the grey-beard must have been,
 None of our countrymen.
 Otherwise he never would have dreamt of coming

To the untrodden thicket of the Virgins here,
 Of the mighty Powers, whom to name we fear,
 Whose abode we pass unprying, 130
 Without babble or loud crying,
 Keeping mouth closely pent
 Save on what is innocent.
 Now, 'tis said, without dread
 Some one has intruded on the sacred space;
 I the bound searching round
 Cannot yet alight upon his hiding place.

ŒDIPUS *advancing, with* ANTIGONE

I am the man; for by the sound I see you,
 As is the saying.

I CITIZEN

Hilloa! hoa! who is this, 140
 Dreadful to see, dreadful to hear?

ŒDIPUS

I pray you,
 Do not regard me as a trespasser—

I CITIZEN

Averting Zeus! who may this old man be?

ŒDIPUS

One of a sort far other than the first
 To be deemed happy, O you guardians
 Over this land; I am myself the proof;
 I should not, otherwise, be groping thus,
 Led by another's eyesight, or, being great,
 On slender moorings come to anchorage.

Chorus

O thine eyes! thy blind eyes!
 Wert thou thus, as I surmise, 150
 For sad life—for long life—equipped from life's beginning?
 None the more, if so be,
 Shalt thou score, spite of me,
 On curses fresh curses, by sinning—yea, by sinning.
 But that thou trespass not
 On the grassy coverts of this hallowed spot,

Where the bowl of water by the herbage quaffed
 Flows with mingled runnels of a sweetened draught— 160
 Beware, beware sirrah stranger !
 Get thee hence ! Avoid thy danger !
 (His long start costs me dear ;)
 Thou tired vagabond, dost hear ?
 Though thou bring word or thing
 Hither for debate, avoid the sacred glen !
 Passing where all may fare
 Speak with freedom ; but refrain thee, until then !

ŒDIPUS

Daughter, what course is to be thought of, now ?

ANTIGONE

*My father, what the citizens observe
 That should we also ; yield, in what we must,
 And hearken.*

ŒDIPUS

Well, give me a hand. 170

ANTIGONE

You have it.

ŒDIPUS

*Sirs, let me meet no wrong, if I remove,
 Trusting in you.*

I CITIZEN

*Never against thy will
 Out of these sanctuaries, ancient sir,
 Shall any drag thee.*

ŒDIPUS

Am I to proceed ?

I CITIZEN

Step forward, further !

ŒDIPUS

Further yet ? 180

I CITIZEN

*Walk on,
 Damsel, and guide his steps ; for you perceive.*

ANTIGONE

*Follow, my father, follow in my train,
With feet all darkling.*

I CITIZEN

*Man of woes, endure,
Being as thou art, a stranger on strange soil,
To abhor what'e'r the City has held in hate,
And what She loves, to honour.*

ŒDIPUS

*Come, my child,
Lead me where, stepping without sacrilege,
Something we may impart, something receive ;
And let us not contend with fate.*

190

I CITIZEN

*Halt there!
No further bend thy steps, over that ramp
Of rock in front.*

ŒDIPUS

What, thus?

I CITIZEN

Yes, as you have it.

ŒDIPUS

May I be seated?

I CITIZEN

*Yes, if you bend sideways,
And sit down low, just on the edge of the stone.*

ANTIGONE

*Father, this is my business; gently take
One step with my step, and commit—*

ŒDIPUS

Eh me!

ANTIGONE

Thine aged frame into my friendly hand.

ŒDIPUS seated

Ah, my misfortune!

I CITIZEN

Man of woes, declare

(Now that thou hast complied) what was thy birth, 200
What wretched wanderer art thou, what the country
We are to know for thine.

ŒDIPUS

Ah strangers,
I am an outcast; but forbear, forbear—

I CITIZEN

Why do you deprecate my question, sir?

ŒDIPUS

Forbear, I say, to ask me what I am,
Nor seek nor question further.

I CITIZEN

Wherefore so?

ŒDIPUS

Awful my birth.

I CITIZEN

Tell it.

ŒDIPUS

O child—ah me,
What must I answer?

I CITIZEN

Of what seed thou art 210
Of the father's side, sir, say.

ŒDIPUS

Woe's me, my child,
What shall I do?

ANTIGONE

Speak, for you walk upon
The very verge.

OEDIPUS

I will; I have no refuge.

I CITIZEN

Ye are both long about it; make more speed!

OEDIPUS

Know ye of one from Laius—

I CITIZEN

Ha, how? how?

OEDIPUS

And of the race of Labdacus—

I CITIZEN

O Jove!

OEDIPUS

Miserable Oedipus?

I CITIZEN

And art thou he?

OEDIPUS

Have ye no fear at what I say—

CITIZENS

Oh! oh!

220

OEDIPUS

Unhappy!

CITIZENS

Out, O out!

OEDIPUS

*Now, daughter,
What will become of us?*

CITIZENS

*Off, off,**Out of the place!*

ŒDIPUS

*And what you promised me,
What will you make of that?*

Chorus

The vengeance of Destiny visiteth none,
To punish a man to whom ill was fore-done.
Treason, by treason withstood, and surpassed,
Pays a man trouble, not favour, at last.
Now back with you, back! You have sailing orders!
Get out of this place! Go forth from our borders!
Bring to our gates no more evil fates!

230

ANTIGONE

O kind strangers,
Though you brook not
The old man's presence, my father, here,
To what he did
(Though not with purpose)
Listening, lending an open ear,
Me, not the less, poor maid, I entreat,
Pity, O strangers, who fall at your feet—
Fall at your feet, for my father's sake only
With eyes unblasted facing your face,
Even as though born one of your race,
So mercy may light on the helpless and lonely!
On you, as on Heaven, we depend; reject not
The prayer of the poor, for grace we expect not.
By all you hold dear as your own heart's blood! 250
By your brood! By your bed! By your need! By your God!
You will find no man, searching with heed,
But he must follow, if God lead.

I CITIZEN

Daughter of Œdipus, both him and you,
Trust us, we pity alike, for your distress;
But, reverencing Heaven, we have no power
To go beyond what has been told you now.

ŒDIPUS

What is the use of reputation, then,
Or what of good report, flowing all to nothing,
If it be said of Athens, that she is

The most religious and the only state
Able to guard the stranger in distress,
And that she only can suffice his need,
While you—to me—what have you done with it?
You, who dislodged me from these altar-steps, 260
And now, in fear merely of my name, expel me;
For of my person it is not, or my deeds;
The deeds I did were suffered more than done—
If I might speak to you of that parentage,
For which, as well I know, you are scared at me.
And after all, where was my villany?
I but requited evil done to me;
So that, although I did it knowingly,
Not even then should I be proved a villain.
But as it is, I went the way I went
Unwittingly; and suffered at the hands
Of those who knew that they were injuring me. 270
Wherefore in Heaven's name I beseech you, sirs,
Even as you raised me from my seat, now save me,
And do not, in your reverence for Gods,
Make nought of the Gods' dues; rather consider
How that they mark the virtuous among men,
And mark the wicked too; and that escape
Was never yet, of any man profane.
In whose assemblage tarnish not the lustre
Of Athens the august, lending your hand
To any act of profanation. No!
As you received the suppliant, on your promise, 280
So rescue and preserve me; and survey
These brows, of ill aspect, not without honour.
For holy and righteous am I, who come hither,
And I bring profit to these citizens;
And when that lord arrives, who is your leader,
If you will hearken, I will tell you all;
In the mean time see that you deal not falsely.

I CITIZEN

We cannot help being disturbed, old man,
By the behest you give us; which is couched

In words of no light weight. Sufficeth us 290
That the land's rulers should decide the case.

ŒDIPUS

And where is he that rules this country, sirs?

I CITIZEN

He keeps his father's hold, here; but a post,
The same who sent me hither, is gone to fetch him.

ŒDIPUS

Do you think he will have such respect or care
For the blind man, as to attend in person? 300

I CITIZEN

Ay truly, when he hears your name.

ŒDIPUS

But who

Is there to tell him that?

I CITIZEN

'Tis a long way;

But travellers' gossip often gets abroad,
Which when he hears, he will come, never fear.
For loudly to all ears has past your name;
Wherefore, old man, even though asleep and tired,
Hearing of you, he will make haste and come.

ŒDIPUS

I wish he may, for his own city's good
And mine. For who does not befriend himself
By doing good?

ANTIGONE

O Jove, what shall I say? 310
What shall I think, my father?

ŒDIPUS

But what is it,

Antigone, my child?

ANTIGONE

I see a woman
Coming toward us, mounted on a horse
Of Ætnean breed; and a Thessalian bonnet
Is on her head, tied close about her face,
To screen it from the sun. What shall I say?
Is it—or not? or do my thoughts mislead?
Yes! No! I know not what to say. Alack,
It is no other. Yes, and she looks joyful
At spying me, as she draws near, and shews 320
It is no other than Ismene's self!

ŒDIPUS

How say you, child?

ANTIGONE

Why, that I see your child,
My sister; yes, and you can hear her, straight.

Enter ISMENE and attendant.

ISMENE

Father—and sister! the two names to me
That are most dear! How hardly have I found you,
And hardly can regard you now, for grief!

ŒDIPUS

O child, are you come hither?

ISMENE

O my father,
Hapless to look on!

ŒDIPUS

Are you here, my child?

ISMENE

After much trouble, yes.

ŒDIPUS

Give me your hand, 330
My girl!

ISMENE

I link you, both together.

ŒDIPUS

O

My child—and sister!

ISMENE

Alas, our sorrows!

ŒDIPUS

Hers

And mine?

ISMENE

Yes, and my own as well, unhappy!

ŒDIPUS

Why did you come, child?

ISMENE

Father, because of you.

ŒDIPUS

You wanted me?

ISMENE

Yes, and to bring you news
In person, with my one true servant here.

ŒDIPUS

And the young men your brothers, where have they
Bestowed their labour?

ISMENE

They are—where they are;
It is a heavy time with them, just now.

ŒDIPUS

O how exactly fitted are that pair,
In character and training, for the ways
Followed in Egypt! For the husbands there
Sit within walls and weave, the while their partners 340
Work out of doors, winning their daily food.

Just so, my children, they who fittingly
Should bear this burden which you bear, like maidens
Keep house at home, while in their stead you two
Are toiling to relieve my miseries.
One, ever since she left her nursery
And grew to her full strength, in my train ever
Wanders in wretchedness, an old man's leader,
Through the wild forest often journeying
Foodless and footsore, toiling painfully
Often—in rain and the sun's sultriness, 350
Holding the comforts of her life at home
As nothing to the tending of her sire.
While you, my child, sallied out once before
Bringing your father all the oracles
That were delivered as concerning me,
Without the Cadmeans' knowledge, and became
My faithful watcher, when they banished me ;
And now again—what story are you come
To tell your father ? what dispatch, Ismene,
Transported you from home ? for you are come
Not empty, at least ; of that I am assured ;
Nor without bringing me some cause for fear. 360

ISMENE

As for the sufferings I endured, my father,
Seeking your lodging and abiding-place,
I will omit them ; for I do not care
To feel the pain twice over, in the travail,
And after, in the telling. But the ills
Now compassing your two unhappy sons—
These I have come to shew. For formerly
They were both eager that the sovereignty
Should pass to Creon, and the city, so,
Not be defiled ; professing to regard
The inveterate perdition of the race,
Such as had fastened on your woeful house ; 370
But now some God, and an infatuate mind,
Has caused an evil struggle to arise
Between that pair, thrice miserable, to seize

Upon the government and royal power.
 And now the lad, the younger of the twain,
 Is robbing Polynices of the throne,
 Who is his elder, and has driven him forth
 Out of his native land. He, taking flight
 (As is the general rumour in our ears)
 To Argos in the Vale, is gaining there
 New comrades and connexions to his side,
 Swearing that Argos either shall forthwith 380
 Humble the glory of the Cadmeans' land,
 Or else, exalt it to the height of heaven.
 Dear father, this is not a wordy tale;
 'Tis dreadful fact; and at what point the Gods
 Mean to take pity upon your woes, I know not.

ŒDIPUS

And did you hope already that the Gods
 Would have some care for my deliverance?

ISMENE

Yes, father, after this new oracle.

ŒDIPUS

What is it? What has been revealed, my child?

ISMENE

That you shall be by the inhabitants
 Sought to hereafter, for their safety's sake, 390
 Whether in life or death.

ŒDIPUS

But who could profit
 By such a wretch as I?

ISMENE

In you they say
 Their empire lies.

ŒDIPUS

What, now my life is finished,
 Do I begin to live?

ISMENE

'Tis the Gods, now,
Uplift you, who destroyed you formerly.

ŒDIPUS

To fall when young, and be set up when old,
Is poor exchange!

ISMENE

And now because of this
You may expect that Creon will be here
Within no very distant period.

ŒDIPUS

What
To do, my daughter? Pray explain.

ISMENE

To place you
In the near neighbourhood of Theban soil,
So they may have you in their power, but you
Never intrude on the land's boundaries.

400

ŒDIPUS

How are they helped by my lying at their doors?

ISMENE

Your being buried inauspiciously
Brings them disaster.

ŒDIPUS

Even without a God
Might any judgment be convinced of that!

ISMENE

Therefore they mean to fix you, so that you
Shall not be your own master, near their land.

ŒDIPUS

Will they enshroud me in the dust of Thebes?

ISMENE

Father, they dare not, for the blood of kin.

ŒDIPUS

Then they shall never get me in their power.

ISMENE

That will weigh heavy upon Thebes one day.

ŒDIPUS

Under what circumstances, O my child? 410

ISMENE

Through wrath of yours, when they approach your grave.

ŒDIPUS

Child—what you say—whom did you hear it from?

ISMENE

Envoys, returning from the Delphian shrine.

ŒDIPUS

Is it Phœbus who has uttered this of me?

ISMENE

So say the comers to the Theban land.

ŒDIPUS

Did either of my sons, then, hear of it?

ISMENE

Yes, both alike, and understood it well.

ŒDIPUS

And did the varlets, when they heard it, still
Prefer the sceptre to their love for me?

ISMENE

I grieve to hear the question; all the same, 420
Such is my news.

ŒDIPUS

Then may the Gods not quench
The fated strife between them, and the end
May it be for me to give them, of that battle

On which they are set, levelling their spear-points now!
So neither shall that one of them abide
Who holds the sceptre now, and throne, nor he
Who has departed ever more return:
Who verily, when I who fathered them
Was thrust out of the land so shamefully,
Stayed not nor screened me; but between them I
Was sent adrift, sentenced to banishment. 430
You may aver the city as of course
Granted me then, at my desire, this boon;
Nay truly! for upon that selfsame day
When my brain boiled, and to be stoned and die
Seemed sweetest, there was no one that stood up
To help me to my craving; but long after,
When all the trouble was no longer green,
And I perceived my passion had outstripped
The chastisement of my offences past,
Then was it that this happened; then the city 440
Violently drave me from the land, at last;
While they, their father's offspring, in whose power
It lay to help their father, would not do it,
But I have had to wander, out and on,
Thanks to the little word they would not say,
In beggary and exile. And from these,
Being maidens, all that nature lends to them,
Both sustenance and safety by the way,
Ay and familiar comfort, I receive;
While they preferred to their own father thrones
And sceptred rule and territorial sway.
But me for an ally they shall not gain; 450
Nor ever from their Cadmean monarchy
Shall benefit flow to them; this I know,
Hearing the oracles which she now brings me,
And minding also the old prophecies
That I put forth, which Phœbus gave to me.
So now let them send Creon after me,
And every lusty catch-poll in their town;
For, gentlemen, if in the train of these,
The awful Powers who guard your village-ground,

You shall decide to summon up your force
 In my behalf, then will you, for this city,
 Procure a mighty saviour, and entail
 Troubles on those, who are my enemies.

460

I CITIZEN

First, you have won our pity, Œdipus,
 Both for yourself and for your daughters; next,
 Seeing that beside this pleading you propose
 Yourself, to be a saviour for our land,
 I am disposed to give you some good counsel.

ŒDIPUS

Stand my friend, most kind sir; and I will do
 All that you bid me.

I CITIZEN

Come and institute
 Rites of purgation to these deities
 On whom you came and trespassed at the first.

ŒDIPUS

After what fashion, sirs? instruct me.

I CITIZEN

First

Bring holy water, for libations, from
 The running stream; but let your hands be pure.

470

ŒDIPUS

And after I have drawn the limpid wave?

I CITIZEN

Here are some bowls, an artist's handiwork;
 Garland their rims and the two ear-handles.

ŒDIPUS

With leaves or locks of wool, or in what fashion?

I CITIZEN

Yes, with a fleece of a newborn ewe-lamb;
 Take it.

OEDIPUS

So be it. And how must I conclude?

I CITIZEN

Turn to the region where the dawn begins
And pour libations.

OEDIPUS

From the vessels, here,
Of which you spake, am I to pour them?

I CITIZEN

Yes,
Three several pourings; and the last one drain.

OEDIPUS

And with what offering shall I fill it? Tell me 480
This also.

I CITIZEN

Honey and water; put no wine.

OEDIPUS

And when the earth's dark leaves have taken these?

I CITIZEN

Then strew upon it thrice nine olive-boughs
All round you; and then offer up this prayer.

OEDIPUS

Let me hear that; for it is of most moment.

I CITIZEN

That as we call them Favourers, they would deign
With favouring breasts to accept the suppliant,
And save him; pray yourself, or in your stead
Some other, speaking in an undertone,
Not so as to be heard. Then come away
And do not look behind you. This performed, 490
I will stand by you gladly; otherwise,
O stranger, I should have my fears for you.

ŒDIPUS

Girls, do you hear these people of the place?

ANTIGONE

We hear them well. Tell us what we must do.

ŒDIPUS

I cannot go; for neither have I strength
 Nor eyesight for the work—two hindrances;
 One of you two go and discharge this duty;
 For I suppose one person will suffice
 For tens of thousands, with good will, to do it.
 Make haste and set about it, anyhow; 500
 But do not leave me by myself alone;
 For in my frame there is not strength enough
 To creep unaided, or without a guide.

ISMENE

Well, I will go and do it. But the place—
 I want to know where I must look for it.

I CITIZEN

Lady, beyond this thicket. Anything
 That you may need, there is one dwelling there
 Who will inform you.

ISMENE

I will betake me to it.
 Guard you our father here, Antigone.
 We must not murmur at the labour, even
 If we do labour, in a parent's cause.

Exit.

I. I.

I CITIZEN

Stranger! 'Tis cruel to awake again 510
 The long since deadened pain;
 And yet I fain would learn—

ŒDIPUS

What is it, friend?

I CITIZEN

The story of all that self-disclosed distress—
Pitiful, remediless—
Wherewith it was thy fortune to contend.

ŒDIPUS

Nay do not, for your hospitality,
Open my ruthless wounds!

I CITIZEN

I long to know,
And to know right, that which is noised of thee
So widely, and so unremittingly.

ŒDIPUS

Woe's me!

I CITIZEN

Bear with me, I pray thee.

ŒDIPUS

Woe, ah woe!

I CITIZEN

Hearken to my request;
For I too hearken in all, at thy behest.

520

I. 2.

ŒDIPUS

Guilt overwhelmed me, friends—whelmed me, in sooth,
(God be my witness!) while my will was free;
Yet, as things happened, nought advisedly.

I CITIZEN

To what effect?

ŒDIPUS

The city bound the chain
Of an unhappy nuptial-bond on me,
That knew not what I did.

I CITIZEN

Didst thou in truth,
As I hear said,
Share an ill-omened-bed
With her—who was thy mother?

ŒDIPUS

O, I die,
Stranger, to hear it uttered! And these twain— 30

I CITIZEN

How say you?

ŒDIPUS

Young
Daughters of mine, twin curses!

I CITIZEN

God!

ŒDIPUS

Are sprung
From the same mother's travail-pangs, as I.

II. 2.

I CITIZEN

Are these thy off-spring?

ŒDIPUS

Yes,
And their sire's sisters also.

I CITIZEN

Alas!

ŒDIPUS

Alas,
Wave upon wave of evils, numberless!

I CITIZEN

Thou didst endure—

ŒDIPUS

I endured misery;
Yea, it abides with me.

I CITIZEN

Thou didst commit—

ŒDIPUS

Nay, I committed nothing!

I CITIZEN

How was that?

ŒDIPUS

I but received a boon, wretch that I was!
Such, that my service never merited at
The city's hands, to have the gift of it.

540

II. 2.

I CITIZEN

How then, unhappy one? Wert thou the cause

ŒDIPUS

What next? What would you know?

I CITIZEN

Of thine own father's murder?

ŒDIPUS

O my heart!
Thou hast struck me a second blow,
Smart upon smart!

I CITIZEN

Didst thou kill—

ŒDIPUS

Yea, I killed him. But the deed
Had something in it—

I CITIZEN

What is there to plead?

ŒDIPUS

Appealing to the laws.

I CITIZEN

How could that be?

ŒDIPUS

I will declare to thee;
Those whom I slew would have been slayers of me;
Whence legally stainless, and in innocence,
I stumbled on the offence.

I CITIZEN

See how our master Theseus, Ægeus' son,
At hearing of thee started, and is here.

550

Enter THESEUS.

THESEUS

Many having told to me in former times
 The bloody story of thine eyes put out,
 I know thee, son of Laius ; and to-day,
 Hearing the tidings as I came along,
 I am the more assured ; for by thy garb
 And thine afflicted presence we perceive
 That thou art—what thou art ; and pitying thee,
 Thou forlorn Œdipus, I would enquire
 With what petition to the city or me
 Thou and thy hapless follower wait on us?
 Instruct me ; for calamitous indeed
 Must be the case disclosed by thee, wherefrom
 I should start backward. I remember, I,
 How in my youth I was a wanderer,
 As thou art ; and encountered risks as many,
 In my own person, on a foreign soil,
 As any man ; therefore no foreigner,
 Such as now thou art, would I turn aside
 From helping to deliver ; knowing well
 That I am human, and have no more share
 In what to-morrow will afford, than thou.

560

ŒDIPUS

Theseus, thy nobleness—without much talking—
 Hath so vouchsafed, that little is required
 For me to say. For thou hast named for me
 Both who I am, and from what father sprung,
 And from what country coming ; wherefore now
 Nothing is left me, but to speak the thing
 Which I have need of, and my say is done.

570

THESEUS

That very thing now tell, that I may know it.

ŒDIPUS

I come, meaning to give this sorry body
 A gift to thee ; not goodly to the eyesight ;

But better is the gain to come of it
Than beauty.

THESEUS

But what gain do you suppose
You have brought with you?

ŒDIPUS

You will learn in time ;
Not just at present.

580

THESEUS

At what period then
Will the advantage of your gift be shewn?

ŒDIPUS

When I am dead, and you have buried me.

THESEUS

O, you are claiming life's last offices ;
But all that is between—either you forget,
Or prize at nothing.

ŒDIPUS

Yes, because in them
I have all the rest summed up.

THESEUS

Tiny indeed
Is this request you proffer !

ŒDIPUS

No; look to it ;
The coming struggle is not—is not light.

THESEUS

Do you speak of your own offspring and of me?

ŒDIPUS

They will use force to have me carried thither.

THESEUS

Well—if you would be willing—to stay banished
Were hardly for your honour.

590

ŒDIPUS

When I wished it,
They were the hindrance!

THESEUS

O insensate one,
Wrath is not fitting in adversity!

ŒDIPUS

When you have heard me, censure; but as yet
Spare me.

THESEUS

Say on; for inconsiderately
It fits me not to speak.

ŒDIPUS

Theseus, I have suffered
Wrongs upon wrongs, most cruel.

THESEUS

Do you mean
The old misfortune of your birth?

ŒDIPUS

O no;
There is no Greek that does not babble of that!

THESEUS

What is this sickness then, of which you ail,
Sorer than human?

ŒDIPUS

Thus it stands with me;
By my own offspring was I hunted forth
Out of my country; and I never more
Can, as a parricide, again return.

600

THESEUS

Then why should they desire to send for you,
To make you live remote?

ŒDIPUS

The divine lips

Leave them no choice.

THESEUS

What sort of detriment

Are they afraid of, from the oracles?

ŒDIPUS

It is their destiny to be overthrown

Here, in this land.

THESEUS

And how shall come about

The bitter feeling between them and me?

ŒDIPUS

Dear son of Ægeus, to the Gods alone

It belongs never to be old or die,

But all things else melt with all-powerful Time.

Earth's might decays, the body's might decays, 610

And belief dies, and disbelief grows greenly;

And varying ever is the passing breath

Either 'twixt friend and friend, or city and city.

For to some now, and by and by to some,

Their friendship's pleasantness is turned to gall,

Ay, and again to friendship. So in Thebes,

Though all be now smooth weather there towards you,

Yet, as he goes, the multitudinous Time

Gives birth to multitudinous nights and days,

Wherein, at a mere word, shall Theban steel

Sever your now harmonious hand-claspings! 620

Then shall my sleeping and invisible clay,

Cold in the ground, drink their warm life-blood—if

Jove be still Jove, and Jove-born Phœbus true.

But since it is unpleasing to declare

The words that sleep unuttered, suffer me

To stay as I began, only preserving

Your own good faith; and you shall never say

(So but the Gods do not prove false to me)

That you received, into these regions,
In Œdipus, a thankless habitant.

I CITIZEN

The man, my Liege, has constantly averred
He will perform these and like offices 630
Unto our land.

THESEUS

Who, I should like to know,
Would banish kindness from a man like this,
To whom, indeed, the hearth of comradeship
With us is ever open; and besides,
He, coming as a suppliant to the Gods,
Pays no small tribute to the land, and me.
Mindful whereof, I never will cast out
The favour that he offers; nay, I will
Replant him in our country. And if here
'Tis pleasant to the stranger to abide,
I shall enjoin you to take care of him;
Or if it pleases him to go with me—
Why, Œdipus, I leave to you the choice, 640
Which you will have. Your pleasure shall be mine.

ŒDIPUS

O Zeus, shower blessings on such men as this!

THESEUS

Which is your fancy? To go home with me?

ŒDIPUS

If it were lawful. But the spot is here—

THESEUS

For you to do—what? for I shall not hinder.

ŒDIPUS

For me to vanquish those who have banished me—

THESEUS

You magnify the advantage of your presence.

ŒDIPUS

If what you say abides, and you perform.

THESEUS

Be easy about me ; I shall not fail you.

ŒDIPUS

I will not swear you, like some caitiff ! 650

THESEUS

Nay,

You would gain nothing more than my word gives you.

ŒDIPUS

How will you do it ?

THESEUS

What fear you specially ?

ŒDIPUS

There will come those—

THESEUS

These will take care for them !

ŒDIPUS

Mind how you leave me—

THESEUS

Teach not me my duty !

ŒDIPUS

Needs must, who fears.

THESEUS

My spirit is not afraid.

ŒDIPUS

You do not know the threats—

THESEUS

I know that no one

Shall drag you from this place in spite of me.

As for their threatenings—many are the threats

In anger spoken often, but in vain ;
 For when the reason has come home again,
 The threats are vanished. And for them, I know, 660
 Though they took heart to talk portentously
 Of carrying you away, yet it may happen
 The sea between us will be found full wide,
 And hardly navigable. I bid you, rather,
 Be of good cheer, apart from my resolve,
 Since Phœbus sent you hither ; and anyhow,
 Even in my absence, I am well assured
 My name will guard you from all injury. *Exit.*

Chorus

I. 1.

Stranger, thou art come to rest
 Where the pasturing folds are best
 Of this land of goodly steeds,
 In Colonos' glistening meads, 670
 Where the clear-voiced nightingale
 Oftenest in green valley-glades
 Loves to hide her and bewail ;
 Under wine-dark ivy shades,
 Or the leafy ways, untrod,
 Pierced by sun or tempest never,
 Myriad-fruited, of a God ;
 Where in Bacchanalian trim
 Dionysus ranges ever
 With the Nymphs who fostered him ; 680

I. 2.

And with bloom each morning there
 Sky-bedewed, in clusters fair
 Without ceasing flourishes
 The narcissus, from of old
 Crown of mighty Goddesses,
 And the crocus, rayed with gold ;
 Nor do sleepless fountains fail,
 Wandering down Cephissus' streams ;
 But with moisture pure return, 690
 Quickening day by day the plains
 In the bosom of the vale ;
 Which nor choirs of Muses spurn,
 Nor the Queen with golden reins,
 Aphrodita, light-esteem.

II. 1.

Also there is a plant, self-sown,
Untrained, ungrafted—never known,
That I have heard, in Asian soil,
Or Pelops' mighty Dorian isle,
Which, terror of the spears of foes,
In this our land most largely grows— 700
The grey health-giving olive-leaf;
Which neither youth nor veteran chief
Shall e'er destroy with violent hand;
For that the face of Jove above it,
An ever watching guardian, and
The azure-eyed Athana, love it.

II. 2.

And further, more than all, we boast
The great God's bounty, prized the most
Of honours by our Mother-state— 710
Fair sea, fleet steed, and fruitful strain.
O Cronos' son, Poseidon, King,
Thou givest her this praise to sing!
Thou didst for these highways create
The bit, the courser to refrain;
And thy good oar-blades, fashioned meet
For hands of rowers, with bounding motion
Follow the Nereids' hundred feet,
In marvellous dance, along the Ocean.

ANTIGONE

O highest extolled of lands, it is for thee 720
To illustrate, now, these glorious words of praise!

ŒDIPUS

What is there new, my daughter?

ANTIGONE

Here comes Creon
To meet us, father, and not escort-less.

ŒDIPUS

O most kind elders, let the bourn of safety
Now stand revealed upon your part for me!

I CITIZEN

Courage, it is at hand. If we are old,
The vigour of our country has not aged.

Enter CREON, attended.

CREON

Gentle inhabitants of this your land,
I read it in your eyes, you have conceived
Some sudden apprehension at my coming ; 730
Of which be not afraid, and spare to chide me.
For with no rough design am I come hither,
Being an old man, and knowing I am arrived
Before a city of as potent power
As any in Hellas ; rather, I am sent—
Not upon one man's errand, but commissioned
By all the folk, with purpose to persuade—
Old as I am—this man to follow me
To Theban soil ; since it has fallen to me,
By kinship, to bewail most grievously
Of our whole city his calamities.
Now therefore, O thou luckless Œdipus, 740
Listen to me, and turn thy footsteps home.
All the whole Cadmean people summon thee,
And rightly ; and among them I the most ;
Who, if I be not born basest of men,
As much the most, old sir, grieve at thy troubles,
Beholding thee in misery, far from home,
And yet a wanderer always, tramping on,
Indigent, leaning on one handmaiden,
Who I—God help me ! never had surmised
Could fall to such a depth of ignominy
As this unhappy one has fallen to,
Thee and thy blindness tending evermore 750
In habit of a beggar—at her age—
Maiden as yet, but any passer's prey !
What, is it shocking, the reproach I cast
On you, and on myself, (wretch that I am !)
And the whole house ? Then by our fathers' Gods,

Since what is blazed abroad cannot stay hidden,
Hearken to me, and hide it, Œdipus ;
Consent to seek your city and fathers' roof;
Not without salutation to this town,
For she deserves it well ; but with more justice
Might she that is at home be revered,
Who was your foster-mother formerly.

760

ŒDIPUS

Thou aweless villain, ready to adduce
Specious invention of just argument
From every case, why do you tempt me thus?
Why do you seek to take me, a second time,
In such a snare as must torment me most
If I were in your power? For formerly,
When I was sick of my domestic ills,
When to avoid the land had charms for me,
You would not grant the favour I desired ;
But when I was now sated of my frenzy,
And it was pleasant to wag on at home,
Straightway you thrust me forth ! you cast me out ! 770
Never a jot you cared for all this kinship !
And now once more, when you perceive this city
And all her sons in friendship at my side,
You try, with your soft cruel words, to part us !
And yet what charm lies in 'befriending men
Against their will? since if a man to you
Refused a favour, when you begged for it,
And gave you nothing, and then afterwards,
When you were satisfied with your desire,
And all the grace was graceless, proffered it,
Would not the pleasure so received be vain? 780
Such are the offers which you make to me,
Good in pretence, but evil in the trial.
Yea, these shall hear how I will prove you evil ;
You are come to take me, yet not take me home,
But plant me in your confines, that your city
May come off scatheless from this land of theirs.
You shall not have it ! This, though, you shall have ;

My spirit for evil haunting evermore
 About your country; and this my sons shall have,
 As much of my domain as may suffice
 Just to lie dead in! Can I not discern 790
 Better than you what is the case of Thebes?
 Far better; having better oracles,
 Phœbus, and Zeus himself, who is his sire.
 But treacherous is the tongue you bring with you,
 And of sharp edges; and in using it
 You shall take more to hurt you, than to heal.
 But—for I know I do not work on you—
 Go! and let us live here. Being content,
 We are well enough provided, as we are.

CREON

Do you think my game is lost, as to your matters, 800
 In this discussion, rather—or your own?

ŒDIPUS

All that I care for is that you should fail
 Either to persuade me, or these by-standers.

CREON

O wretched man, have you no growth of sense,
 At last, to boast of? Do you hug dishonour
 To your old age?

ŒDIPUS

You are adroit in tongue;
 But I know no man righteous, who speaks well
 Whate'er the cause.

CREON

To say what's seasonable,
 And to say much, are different.

ŒDIPUS

You, no question,
 Say—O how little—and that seasonable!

CREON

Not in the judgment of a mind like yours! 810

ŒDIPUS

Depart ; for I will speak for these as well ;
Do not come cruising, keeping watch on me,
Where I must dwell.

CREON

These I attest, not you ;
But for the answer you will make your friends,
If I once catch you—

ŒDIPUS

Who can capture me
Against the will of my defenders?

CREON

Yea,
Capture apart, you will be vexed anon.

ŒDIPUS

What sort of act is there behind this menace?

CREON

Of your two daughters one I have just seized
And sent ; and her I will take presently.

ŒDIPUS

O sorrow !

820

CREON

You will have more occasion to sing sorrow,
Immediately, for this !

ŒDIPUS

You have seized my daughter?

CREON *pointing to* ANTIGONE.

Yes, and will seize her, soon !

ŒDIPUS

Ho, gentlemen !
What will you do? Will you play false to me?
Will you not hunt the villain off your soil?

I CITIZEN

Withdraw sir, straightway; for you deal not rightly
In this; nor yet in what you did before.

CREON *to the attendants*

Now is your time; carry the girl away;
By force, if she will not consent to go.

ANTIGONE

Unhappy, whither shall I fly? What help
Of God or man shall I lay hold on?

I CITIZEN

Sir,

What are you doing?

CREON

I will not touch the man; 830
Only this maiden, who belongs to me.

ŒDIPUS

You lords of Athens!

I CITIZEN

Sir, you do not rightly!

CREON

I do.

I CITIZEN

How rightly?

CREON

I carry off what is mine.

Seizes Antigone.

ŒDIPUS

Help, Athens!

Chorus

What d'ye mean, sirrah stranger?
Will you not leave hold?
You will come, presently,
To a trial of force!

CREON

Keep off!

Chorus

Not from you, till you desist.

CREON

I tell you, you will have to fight my city,
If you do me a harm.

ŒDIPUS

Did I not say so?

I CITIZEN *to the attendants*

Take your hands off that maiden instantly!

CREON

Keep your commands for those you rule!

I CITIZEN

Let go!

I tell you,

840

CREON *to the attendants*

And I tell you, to go your ways.

Chorus

Come on, here, come!
Come on, neighbours all!
The town is being spoiled—
Our town, by force of arms!
Come on, here, to me!

ANTIGONE

I am dragged away, unhappy! O sirs—sirs!

ŒDIPUS

Where are you, daughter?

ANTIGONE

Here, borne along perforce.

ŒDIPUS

Reach out your hands, my child!

ANTIGONE

I am not able.

CREON

Will not you take her on?

Exeunt attendants with ANTIGONE.

ŒDIPUS

Wretch that I am!

CREON

At least you shall not any longer make
Of these two crutches an excuse to roam ;
But since you choose to gain a victory
At the expense of your own land, and friends, 850
By whose commands, although myself am royal,
I do these things, why take it! for in time
You will find out, I know, that neither now
Are you doing well to your own self, nor yet
Did so before, crossing your friends, to indulge
The frenzy, which is your perpetual bane.

I CITIZEN

Hold there, sir stranger!

CREON

Touch me not, I say.

I CITIZEN

If they are lost, I will hold fast to you!

CREON

You shall soon spare a weightier pledge to Thebes;
For I will lay my hands not on them only.

I CITIZEN

What will you turn to?

CREON

I will seize him too, 860

And carry him off!

I CITIZEN

You speak a perilous word.

CREON

I swear it shall be done forthwith.

I CITIZEN

Unless

The ruler of this country hinder thee!

ŒDIPUS

O shameless voice! Would you lay hands on me?

CREON

Silence, I say!

ŒDIPUS

Nay, may these Goddesses
Leave me but breath enough to lay this curse
On thee, thou monster! who hast torn away
No other than an eye—by force—from me,
Lost—like the eyes I lost before! For this,
May the all-seeing among Gods, the Sun,
Give to thyself, and to thy family,
Even such a life, as is my own old age!

870

CREON

You natives of this country, mark you this?

ŒDIPUS

They mark us both, and understand that I,
Wronged by thy deeds, with words defend myself.

CREON

I will not check my fury; though alone,
And slow with age, I will arrest him here.

ŒDIPUS

Unhappy that I am!

Chorus

How swollen is the pride
You are come with hither,
If you think, sir stranger,
To accomplish this!

CREON

I think it.

THESEUS

How? Who has hurt you? Speak!

ŒDIPUS

Creon here, whom you see, has torn away
The one poor pair of children left to me!

THESEUS

How say you?

ŒDIPUS

You have heard how I am wronged.

THESEUS

Some servant go as quick as possible
To the altars by, and make the people all—
Horsemen and footmen—from the sacrifice
Hurry, with loosened reins, straight to the spot 900
Where the highways out of two gorges meet,
Lest the girls pass, and I become a mock
To this my guest, worsted by violence.
Go, as I bid you, quickly; *Exeunt Guards.*

As for him,

Were I as far in anger as he merits,
I had not suffered him to pass unscathed
Out of my hands; but now, with the same law
Shall he be suited, which he brought with him—
That, and no other—Sir! you shall not stir
Out of this country more, till you have brought
And set those maidens here, for all to see; 910
Since you have wrought unworthily of me,
And of your lineage, and of your own land,
Who, entering on a state that cares for right,
And decides nothing without precedent,
Must set at nought our country's officers,
And in this onslaught hale away by force
And make a prize of anything you please;
Deeming my city to be void of men,
Or manned with slaves, and my own self worth nothing!
And yet it was not Thebes taught you this baseness;

Thebes is not used to nourish lawless men, 920
 Nor would approve you, if she heard of you
 Despoiling me, yea and the Gods, by force
 Dragging away poor creatures—supplicants.
 I, if I did intrude upon your land,
 Even if I had a cause more just than any,
 Never, without the country's ruler's leave,
 Whoever he might be, should have been found
 Haling and leading captive; but I know
 How guest to host ought to comport himself.
 But you disgrace a state, that deserved better—
 Your own—by your own act; and your full years 930
 Leave you at once empty of sense, and old.
 So said I once before, and I now tell you;
 Except you want to be compelled to stay
 Against your will, an alien, in this land,
 Have the girls brought back hither instantly!
 You hear me say it, and what I say, I mean.

I CITIZEN

Do you see the pass you have arrived at, sir?
 How you would seem, judging by your parentage,
 Just, and are found to be a wrong-doer?

CREON

Not that I call this city void of men,
 Or void of counsel, as thou sayest I do, 940
 O son of Ægeus, have I done this deed;
 But apprehending no enthusiasm
 About my kindred could have fallen on these,
 That they, against my will, should cherish them;
 And I felt certain they would not receive
 A man polluted, and a parricide,
 Nor one with whom was found the consciousness
 Of an incestuous wedlock; such a Hill
 Was theirs, of Ares, rich in counsel, which
 I knew to be established in their land,
 That suffers not such vagabonds to dwell
 Within their city's bounds; and in that trust

I undertook to make this capture mine. 950
 And even this I should not have essayed,
 If he had not denounced a bitter curse
 On me, and on my house ; wherefore, being wronged,
 This, in return, I thought to do to him.
 For of resentment there is no old age,
 Other than death. No fret can reach the dead.
 Now, you will do just what you please ; for me—
 Me friendlessness makes insignificant,
 Although my words are just ; yet when assailed,
 Old as I am, I will attempt revenge.

ŒDIPUS

O front of impudence ! Which thinkest thou 960
 Now to degrade—My grey hairs, or thine own ?
 Who hast spit forth out of thy mouth at me
 Murders and marriages and accidents,
 Which to my grief, not of free will, I suffered ;
 Such was the will of Heaven, that had some cause
 For wrath, it may be, with our house, of old.
 Since for myself, I know you cannot find
 Any reproach of wrongfulness in me,
 That could have caused me to commit these wrongs
 Against myself and mine ; for, answer me,
 If to my father by an oracle
 The revelation came that he should die 970
 By his son's hands, how can you justly tax
 Me with the fact, whom neither father yet
 Then had begot, or mother had conceived,
 Me, who as yet had not begun to be ?
 And if thereafter proving—as I proved—
 Hapless, I did lay hands upon my sire
 And slay him, nothing knowing of what I did,
 Nor yet to whom I did it, how, I ask,
 Can you with reason blame the unconscious deed !
 And for my mother—are you not ashamed,
 O miserable ! at forcing me to name
 Her marriage, your own sister's—as I will— 980
 I will not now be silent, you being grown

To such a monster of outspokenness !
She bare—ah yes, unknowingly she bare
Me—who not knew ! Woe worth the while to me !
And having given me birth, she brought me forth
Children—her own reproach ! But of set purpose,
For one thing, well I know, you spit this venom
On her, and me ; whereas I wedded her
Unwitting, and unwillingly speak of it.
But not for this my marriage, nor for that—
That parricide, which you continually
Throw in my teeth, bitterly upbraiding it, 990
Do I consent to be called infamous.
For answer me a question ; but this one ;
If any person here upon the spot
Drew near to kill you—you the just one—whether
Would you enquire if he that sought your life
Were your own father, or chastise him straight ?
You would chastise the offender, I conceive,
If you love life ; not look about for law.
Just such was the misfortune I incurred,
Led by the hand of Heaven ; for which, I fancy,
Not even my father's spirit, were he alive,
Could say one word against me. And yet you—
(For just you are not, but think well to utter 1000
All things, both lawful and unlawful,) you
Slander me with these sayings before them all !
Yea, you make free to fawn on Theseus' name,
And upon Athens—how decorously
Her citizens are governed, and so praising,
You miss out this, that if there be a land
That knows what reverence to the Gods is due,
'Tis this herein excels, whence to remove
Me, the old suppliant, you assail my person,
And seize my daughters, and make off with them.
Wherefore these maiden Powers I invoke 1010
With supplications, and with prayers adjure
To come, as aiders and auxiliaries ;
So you may learn what sort of men they are,
By whom this city is defended.

I CITIZEN

Sir,

The stranger is a good man ; and his woes
Are horrible, and worthy of relief.

THESEUS

Enough of words ; they speed, who have done the wrong,
While we, of the injured party, stand here still.

CREON

What is it you bid a poor weak man to do ?

THESEUS

To lead the way thither, and to take me with you,
That, if you have these maidens, whom we seek, 1020
Within our bounds, yourself may find them for me ;
But if your guards are making off with them,
We need not toil ; for there are others there,
No laggards, whom they never shall escape,
Out of this country, to give thanks to Heaven.
Lead forward ! Know, sir captor, you are caught !
Fortune has trapped you, hunter ! So it is,
Nothing abides of what is got by guile.
And you shall have no help ; I am sure you have come
Not single, nor unfurnished, to the point
Of violence, such as you have here essayed, 1030
But there was some one whom you trusted in.
I must look to it ; I must not let this city
Be feebler than a single mortal's arm.
Do you take my sense ? Or does my speaking seem
As idle, now, as when you framed this project ?

CREON

Being here, you may say on, I shall not cavil ;
But once at home, I shall know my part, too.

THESEUS

Ay, threaten us, and so—march ! You, (Edipus,

Abide securely here ; and credit me,
 Till I have given your children to your arms, 1040
 Except I shall die first, I will not leave it.

ŒDIPUS

God speed you, Theseus, for your nobleness,
 And for your duteous providence towards me.

Chorus

I. 1.

I wish that I could be
 Where foes are gathering fast,
 Soon to be hurled together, brand on brand,
 With clamour of battle ! along either strand—
 Pythian, or that where by the torches' light
 Sit Queens, dispensing many a holy rite 1050
 To worshipping mortals ; Queens whose golden key
 Upon the lips hath passed
 Of all their ministering Eumolpidæ ;
 Soon, methinks, there
 Shall Theseus, the awakener of the fight,
 And that unconquered sister pair,
 Amid the fields hard by,
 Join voices in one loud effectual rescue-cry !

I. 2.

Or haply pass they now
 Out from the Æatid meads,
 Nigh to that snow-clad mountain's western brow,
 Flying on fleet steeds 1060
 Or swift contending chariots ? He shall fail !
 The battle spirit of our Athenian race
 Is terrible ; terrible in pride of place
 Are Theseus' children ; lo where brightly shines
 Curb beyond curb, and all along the lines
 Of bridle-piece on bridle-piece of mail
 Come charging on
 Horsemen on horses, warriors who revere 1070
 Athana, her to whom the horse is dear,
 And him, the Sea-God, the land's guardian, Rhea's own son !

II. 1.

Are they at work ? Do they linger yet ?
 How my mind forebodes I shall greet, ere long,

Them that were injured—the maids who met
 From kindred hands injurious wrong.
 Zeus works—he is working a thing to-day ;
 Prophet am I of a well-won field ; 1080
 O would that I were as a swift-winged dove,
 Rocked by the winds, from the clouds above
 To uplift my gaze, and to survey
 The arms that triumph, the arms that yield !

II. 2.

Hail, great Master of Gods in heaven,
 All-seeing Zeus ! With conquering might
 To the chiefs of our land by Thee be it given
 To obtain this prize—to achieve this fight !
 So Pallas Athana, thy awful maid, 1090
 Grant it ! Phœbus, too, I invoke,
 The Hunter-God—come, visit us here,
 With the chaser of dappled swift-footed deer,
 Thy sister—come, bring aid upon aid
 To this our country and these our folk !

I CITIZEN

You will not say, sir wanderer, to your seer,
 He is no sayer of sooth ; for I perceive
 Those girls conducted hither back again.

ŒDIPUS

Where ? where ? How say you ? What was that you uttered ?

Enter THESEUS, ANTIGONE, ISMENE and Guards.

ANTIGONE

O father, father, might some Deity 1100
 Give you to look upon this best of men,
 Who brings us back to you !

ŒDIPUS

Child, are you there,
 You and your sister ?

ANTIGONE

Yes ; for Theseus' hands
And his good followers', here, redeemed us.

ŒDIPUS

Come,

My girl—Come to your father, both of you,
And let me clasp your form—as I despaired
Ever should be !

ANTIGONE

Have what you ask—the leave,
Not without longing.

ŒDIPUS

Where—where are you ?

ANTIGONE

Here,

Both of us, coming close.

ŒDIPUS

My darling sprays !

ANTIGONE

O ay, dear to the stem !

ŒDIPUS

Props of my frame !

ANTIGONE

Poor hapless props, of a poor frame indeed !

ŒDIPUS

I have my darlings ! Now I could even die 1110
Not all unhappy, these being by my side.
Daughters, support me—one on either hand—
Growing to the plant, from which you took your growth,
So shall you end this wretched groping—lonely

Until you came ; then tell me, in fewest words,
All that has happened ; tender maids like you
Need not to make long speeches.

ANTIGONE

Father dear,
This is the man who rescued us ; to him
You must give ear ; his is the deed ; my part
Will be full brief.

ŒDIPUS

O Sir, be not amazed,
If seeing my children here, out of all hope,
Makes me prolong discourse to weariness. 1120
For well I know, this kindness, joy to me,
No other than yourself has shewn towards them.
For you, and no man else, delivered them ;
And may the Gods bestow as I desire
On you, and on this land ; since among you
Alone of men have I found piety,
And gentle dealing, and all truthfulness.
I know it, and these thanks are my return ;
For what I have, I have, only through you.
And now, O king, stretch out your hand to me, 1130
For me to touch, and kiss, if kiss I may,
That forehead. Yet—what am I babbling ! How
Can I desire that you should touch a man—
Wretch that I am ! to whom what taint of ills
Clings not ? I cannot ; nor will suffer you ;
Only the man who has experienced it
Can sympathize with misery such as mine.
Stand still and take my greeting ; and henceforth
Be duly mindful of me, as to-day.

THESEUS

That in the pleasure these your children bring
You set yourself bounds of discourse full wide— 1140
That you preferred their converse in my room,
I do not feel amazement ; no annoy
Possesses me, for this ; I do not care

To have my life made glorious with fine speeches,
 Rather than by my actions. And I shew it ;
 Seeing I have failed in nought of what I sware,
 Old man, to you ; for here they are with me,
 Alive, unharmed of what was threatened them.
 And now, what need to make a bootless boast
 Of how the field was won? things which yourself
 Will come to know from these, having them with you ;
 But on a matter I have met withal 1150
 In coming here just now, advise with me ;
 Since, though it seems a trifle, it is strange ;
 And it behoves us to make light of nothing.

ŒDIPUS

What is it, son of Ægeus? Tell me ; I
 Know nothing of the things you hint.

THESEUS

They say

A man, who is no fellow-citizen—
 And yet akin to you, has taken seat
 Before our altar of Poseidon here,
 Where I was offering, when you summoned me.

ŒDIPUS

What countryman? What is it that he seeks 1160
 In taking sanctuary?

THESEUS

I do not know ;
 Save only that with you, as I am told,
 He asks for a few words, an easy boon.

ŒDIPUS

But of what kind? This is no sanctuary
 Taken for a trifling matter.

THESEUS

As they say,

The object of his journey is to come
To speech of you ; then to depart, in safety,
The way he came.

ŒDIPUS

Who can it be, that seats him
As suppliant thus?

THESEUS

Think if you have some kinsman
In Argos, who might seek this boon of you.

ŒDIPUS

O best of friends, stop, say no more !

THESEUS

What ails you? 1170

ŒDIPUS

Do not request me—

THESEUS

To what purport, say?

ŒDIPUS

I know full well who is the suppliant,
When I hear this.

THESEUS

Who can it be, with whom
I am to have a quarrel?

ŒDIPUS

O king, my son ;
My abhorred son, whose words most grievously
Of all mankind I could endure to hear.

THESEUS

But why? Can you not listen, and still not do

What you mislike? How is the hearing pain?

ŒDIPUS

Most alien to a father's ears, sir king,
Has that voice grown; do not put stress on me
To concede this.

THESEUS

Look if the sanctuary
Does not compel it; whether a regard
Must not be paid towards the God.

1180

ANTIGONE

My father,
Hearken to me, young though I am who speak.
Suffer this friend to gratify the God
And his own heart, in that which he desires;
And grant it us, to let our brother come.
Take heart! You cannot be seduced, perforce,
From your resolve, by words that grate on you;
And to hear words, what harms? for by a word
Are deeds, maliciously designed, bewrayed.
You gave him being; then, if he did to you
The wickedest and worst of injuries, 1190
Not even so, dear father, were it right
For you to do him evil in return.
O let him come! Others have bad sons too,
And keen resentments; but, on being advised,
They are charmed in spirit by the spells of friends.
Look to the past, not to the present; all
That you endured through mother and through sire;
If you regard it, you will find, I know,
That harmful passion ends in further harm.
You have reminders of it far from slight,
Maimed of your sightless eyes. Let us prevail! 1200
It is not right that they whose prayers are just
Should play the beggar; nor that you yourself,
Who are being kindly treated, should not know
How to requite the kindness you receive.

ŒDIPUS

Child, I am conquered, by your words and his ;
A grievous boon ; be it as pleases you ;
Only, if he you speak of shall come hither—
Sir host—never let any one get power
Over my life !

THESEUS

Twice to be told such things
I do not need ; once is enough, old man ;
Nor would I boast ; yet be sure, safe you are,
If any of the Gods takes care of me. 1210
Exit THESEUS, attended.

Chorus

1.

Whoso thinks average years a paltry thing,
Choosing prolonged old age,
He, to my mind, will be found treasuring
A foolish heritage.
For if a man have given him to fulfil
What length of days he will,
Then many things are dealt him, in long days,
That border hard on pain,
And things that please are hidden from the gaze ;
And when the doom of Hades is made plain, 1220
Whereto belongs no bridal, and no quire,
Nor any sound of lyre,
Death, at the end,
Waits, an impartial friend.

Never to have been born is much the best ;
And the next best, by far,
To return thence, by the way speediest,
Where our beginnings are.
For soon as Youth comes to the light of day, 1230
With Folly at his back,
What toilsome labour lurks not in his way ?
Which misses of his track ?
Murders, seditions, battles, envy, strife ;
Yea and old age, in hateful friendlessness—
This is our portion at the close of life—
Strengthless—companionless ;

Wherewith abide
Ills passing all beside.

Such are the aged ; such am I ;
But he, this man of woes,
Is beaten down on every hand, 1240
Like to some wintry Northern strand,
Vext by the Ocean's blows ;
Such waves of ill, so fell and high,
Smite him, without repose ;
Some from the settings of the Day,
Some from his rising light,
Some on the midmost noontide ray,
Some from the Alps of Night.

ANTIGONE

And here we have this stranger, I suppose,
Coming—O father, it is none but he! 1250
Tears, without ceasing, falling from his eyes.

ŒDIPUS

Who is the fellow?

ANTIGONE

He whom all along
We guessed at, Polynices. He is here.

Enter POLYNICES.

POLYNICES

Alack, what shall I do, girls? Must I first
Weep for my own afflictions, or for those
Of my old father, as I see them now?
Whom I have found, an outcast here with you
Upon a foreign soil, clad in such raiment—
Whose horrid grime antique has become native
To his antiquity, withering his trunk, 1260
While from his eye-abated front his hair
Streams in the breeze uncombed, and in his wallet
He carries, I suppose, such provender
For the poor belly, as is akin to these!

The which I recreant all too late perceive,
And do confess I am proved basest of men
By your condition. Ask what I have done
Of none but me. But seeing that Clemency,
Even by the side of Zeus, sharing his throne,
Rules, in all acts, so let her find a place,
Father, by thee ; for remedies, indeed,
Still may remain, of what has been amiss,
But aggravations none.—Why are you silent?
Father, say something ! Do not turn away !
Will you return me not an answer back ?
Insult me with a dumb dismissal ? Tell
Not even why you are enraged with me ?
O offspring of this man, sisters of mine,
Try you to move our father's countenance,
Inexorable, unapproachable,
Not to dismiss me, the God's worshipper,
Thus in disgrace, answering me never a word !

1270

ANTIGONE

Unhappy brother, what you come to seek
Tell us yourself ; for out of many words,
Stirring delight, or breathing pity, or pain,
Come, to the voiceless, powers of utterance.

1280

POLYNICES

I will speak out ; for you direct me well ;
First calling to my aid the God himself,
Up from whose shrine the sovereign of this land
Raised me, and sent me hither, promising me
Audience and answer and safe conduct home.
The which I shall expect to meet with, sirs,
From you, from these my sisters, and my sire.
Next, I would tell you, father, why I came.
I have been driven out of my native land,
Because I claimed, being of an elder birth,
To sit upon your own imperial throne ;
For which Eteocles, though my junior born,

1290

Not overcoming me in argument,
Nor coming to the test of arms or act,
But tampering with the people, exiled me.
Whereof the occasion, without doubt I say,
Is your Erinys; and from soothsayers, 1300
Moreover, so I hear. For when I came
To Argos of the Dorians, I obtained
The daughter of Adrastus to my wife,
And made confederates along with me
As many of the land of Apia
As are deemed first, and have been best approved
In war; meaning to gather against Thebes
My army of Seven Lances in their train,
And either die upon the field, or else
Banish the authors of my banishment.
So be it! Then, why am I come hither now?
Father, with expiatory prayers to you,
Both for myself and my allies, who now 1310
In seven arrays under seven pennons stand
All round the plain of Thebes. Among them comes
Amphiaraus the strong spearman, first
In war, first in the arts of augury;
The second is Ætolian, Ceneus' son,
Tydeus; a third Eteoclus, Argive-born;
Talaus his father sends Hippomedon
Fourth; and the fifth, Capaneus, vaunts himself
That he will set the castle of Thebes on fire
And burn it to the ground; the sixth springs forward,
Parthenopæus the Arcadian, named
As being born of mother theretofore
Long time untamed, the trusty progeny
Of Atalanta; and your offspring I—
(Or if not yours, but by ill destiny
Begotten, yet at least called yours), I lead
The undaunted host of Argos against Thebes.
And all together for these children's sake,
Father, beseech you, and by your own life,
Praying you relax your heavy wrath at me,
Now marching to avenge me of that brother

Who thrust me forth, spoiled of my father-land. 1330
For if there is a truth in oracles,
They say success is to the side you choose.
Wherefore I implore you, by the water springs—
Yea by the Gods of Thebes, hearken and yield ;
For I am poor and exiled ; so are you ;
And under the same lot both you and I
Cringe to a stranger for a lodging. He
Meanwhile, at home, a monarch, well a day !
Lives delicately, and derides us both ;
But with short effort, after small delay,
If you cooperate with my design, 1340
Him will I shatter ! and so take you home,
And in your own house place you, and myself,
And cast him out by force. With your goodwill
I may indulge this boast ; but, without you,
I have not strength even to be saved myself.

I CITIZEN

Now for his sake who sent him, Œdipus,
Say what is meet, and send the man away.

ŒDIPUS

Chiefs of this country—if it had not been
Theseus who sent him hither, to my presence,
Deeming him worthy to hear words of me, 1350
He never should have heard my voice at all !
But now, being so graced, he shall depart
With that within his ears which shall not please him
All his life long. O most desertless villain,
Who, when you held the sceptre and the throne
Which now your brother has achieved in Thebes,
Yourself expelled me—your own father—me
Made homeless—drove to wear this livery,
Which you shed tears to see, now you have come
To walk in the same evil straits with me !
This is no stuff to weep for ; rather is it 1360
For me to bear, mindful, howe'er I live,
That you are my destroyer. For you made me

Familiar with this woe ; you exiled me ;
 And by your act made vagabond, I beg
 My daily bread from others. Had I not
 Fathered these girls, to be my cherishers,
 I had been dead, for aught you did for me ;
 But now these keep me, these my cherishers,
 These men, not women, for their ministering ;
 And ye are sprung from others' loins, not mine.
 Wherefore Heaven's eye is on thee—yea, not yet 1370
 As it soon shall be, if these cohorts move
 Toward Theba's hold ; for it may never be
 That thou shalt storm that city ; rather, first,
 Thou, and thy brother as well, blood-stained, shalt fall.
 Such curses on you I denounced before,
 And summon, now, to come and succour me,
 And make you learn true filial reverence,
 And cease your scorn, although the sire be blind,
 Who fathered sons like you ! These did not so.
 Therefore thy supplication and thy throne 1380
 They far transcend—if still time-honoured Right
 Sits equal in the ancient rule of Jove.
 Hence ! I disown thee, reptile ! of base souls
 Basest ! and take with thee this doom of mine,
 Never to win thy native land in fight,
 Nor to return to Argos in the Vale,
 But by a kindred hand thyself to fall,
 Him having slain, who was thy banisher.
 This is my curse ! And to the abyss I call,
 Hated, of Hades, where my father is, 1390
 To be thy place of exile ; and I call
 These Powers, and Ares, who in both of you
 Hath sown this monstrous hate. Hear me, and go ;
 And as you go, tell all the Cadmeans,
 Ay, and your trusty allies, how Œdipus
 To his own sons dealt out such recompense !

I CITIZEN

I am sorry, Polynices, for the errand
 On which you came ; and now, go straightway back.

POLYNICES

Woe for my journey, woe for my mischance,
Woe for my comrades! To an end like this 1400
Did we set out from Argos on our way!
Such as it is impossible to tell
To any of my fellows, or to turn
Their footsteps backward; only this is left,
Silent, to meet my fate. O misery!
Sisters of mine, his daughters! You have heard
The hard words of our father, cursing me;
I charge you in Heaven's name, if that father's curse
Shall be fulfilled, if it shall be your lot
To return home, do not you look on me
With contumely, but lay me in my tomb, 1410
And grant me funeral rites. Then on that praise
Which from your labour for your father's sake
You now derive, shall rise a second praise,
As ample, through your ministering to me.

ANTIGONE

Polynices, I entreat you, yield to me!

POLYNICES

Tell me in what, dearest Antigone!

ANTIGONE

March back at once to Argos! Do not ruin
Yourself—and Thebes!

POLYNICES

That is impossible;
How could I lead the selfsame army forth,
If I had faltered once?

ANTIGONE

But why again
Must you get angry, boy? Where is your profit 1420
In overthrowing your country?

POLYNICES

To be banished
Is a dishonour; and for me, the elder,
To be so flouted by my brother.

ANTIGONE

Then
Do you not see, how you are carrying out,
Direct, his prophecies, who spells you death,
Each from the other's hand?

POLYNICES

He wishes it.
No, no retreat is left us.

ANTIGONE

Woe for me!
But who that heard the things he prophesied
Will dare to follow?

POLYNICES

Nay, we will tell no tales.
It is the merit of a general
To impart good news, and to conceal the bad. 1430

ANTIGONE

Is this the course you have resolved on, boy?

POLYNICES

Hinder me not. The journey on which I go
Will be made luckless and unfortunate
By this my father and his cleaving curse.
But as for you, God speed you, as you do
My dying hest—for you will have no other
To do for me, in life. Unhand me now.
Farewell. You will behold my face no more.

ANTIGONE

O woe is me!

POLYNICES

Do not lament for me.

ANTIGONE

Who but must mourn thee, brother, rushing thus
On visible death?

POLYNICES

If needs must, die I will.

ANTIGONE

Not so, but hear me!

POLYNICES

Ask not what may not be.

ANTIGONE

Unhappy that I am, if I lose thee!

POLYNICES

This is in Destiny's hands, or thus to be,
Or not to be. For you—the Gods I pray
You never meet with ill; for you deserve,
All will confess, not to be miserable.

*Exit.**Chorus*

I. 1.

Here are new griefs, new and calamitous,
From sources new, that have appeared to us,
Of the blind stranger's making;
Except, indeed, his fate is overtaking:
For of no doom from Heaven can I declare 'tis vain.
The end Time sees, yea, sees away;
Time, that o'erthrows to-day,
Time, that with morning's light uprears again.

1450

Thunder.

I CITIZEN

Heavens! how it thundered!

ŒDIPUS

Children, my children ! will some bystander
Fetch the most excellent Theseus hither ?

ANTIGONE

Father,

What is the end for which you summon him ?

ŒDIPUS

This thunder, winged by Jove, must carry me 1460
Straightway to Hades. Send at once, I say.

*Thunder.**Chorus*

I. 2.

Hark with what might the unutterable roar
Of Jove's own bolt comes crashing down once more !
The very hair on my head
Stands up for dread ;
My spirit quails.—There flames lightning from Heaven again !
What will the issue be ?
I tremble at it ; for surely not in vain
Is it sent forth—never innocuously.

1470
Loud thunder.

I CITIZEN

You mighty Heavens ! Thou Jove !

ŒDIPUS

Daughter, the appointed ending of my life
Has found me, and may not be averted more.

ANTIGONE

How do you know it ? By what conjecture comes
This certainty ?

ŒDIPUS

I feel it. With all speed
Let some one go and fetch this country's king.

Thunder.

Chorus

II. 1.

Hark again, hark,
The echoing clap resounds on either hand.
Have mercy, O God, have mercy, if aught of dark 1480
Thou art now bringing to our mother-land!
May he bring luck who meets me!
Nor, now the man who greets me
Is fraught with doom, let it be mine to share
A fruitless boon—King, Jove, to thee I make my prayer!

ŒDIPUS

Is the man nigh, my children? Will he come
While I still live, and reason rules my mind?

ANTIGONE

What is the trust, which in your mind you crave
To breathe in Theseus' ears?

ŒDIPUS

To pay to him,
For good he did me, a complete return,
Such as I promised in receiving it. 1490

Chorus

II. 2.

Hither, my son,
Quick, quick—howbeit thine offerings are placed
High in the hollow of his altar-stone
To the sea's lord, Poseidon, come with haste!
Thee and thy city and friends
The stranger-guest pretends
To pay with profit, for his profiting,
In righteous measure. Hasten and come forth, our king!

Enter THESEUS, attended.

THESEUS

What is this general din, sounding anew, 1500
Loud from yourselves, and from the stranger plain?

Is it that bolt from Jove, or shower of hail,
Has burst upon you? Anything, while Heaven
Is raising such a storm, is credible.

ŒDIPUS

King, thou art here at need; yea, and some God
Has made thy coming hither prosperous.

THESEUS

What is the new event which has arisen,
O son of Laius?

ŒDIPUS

End of life to me.
And I am anxious not to die forsworn,
In what I promised to this city and thee.

THESEUS

But under what death-symptom do you labour? 1510

ŒDIPUS

The Gods are their own heralds, telling me,
Nothing belying of tokens fixed before.

THESEUS

How do you say that this is shewn you, sir?

ŒDIPUS

The frequent thunderings continuous,
And frequent-flashing arrows, from the hand
Invincible—

THESEUS

You move me; for I see
You are a mighty soothsayer, and your words
Do not come false. Say, then, what we must do.

ŒDIPUS

I will inform thee, son of Ægeus,
Of what shall be in store for this thy city,

Beyond the harm of time. Of my own self,
Without a hand to guide me, presently 1520
I will explore a spot, where I must die.
But never do thou tell to any man,
Where my grave is, or in what parts it lies;
So shall its presence ever strengthen thee,
More than allies or troops of soldiery.
Meanwhile the secrets, which are mysteries
Not to be put in language, thou thyself
Shalt learn when thou goest thither, but alone;
For not to any of these citizens,
Nor to my daughters, though I love them well,
Will I reveal them. Keep them to thyself; 1530
And, when thou art coming to the end of life,
Disclose them only to thy foremost friend,
And let him shew them, ever, to the man
That shall come after. So shall you inhabit
This city, unwasted by the earth-sprung seed;
Though swarms of towns, however you may live
Good neighbours, lightly try to injure you.
For the Gods mark it well, though they are slow,
When a man turns to folly, and forsakes
Their service; such experience, Ægeus' son,
Do thou eschew; nay, what I preach, you know.
Now—to the place! The message from on high 1540
Urges me forth; let us not linger now.
Here, follow me, my daughters! in my turn,
Look, I am acting as a guide to you,
As you were mine, your father's. Come along!—
Nay, do not touch me; let me for myself
Search out the hallowed grave where, in this soil,
It is my fate to lie. Here, this way, come;
This way! for Hermes the Conductor and
The Nether Queen are this way leading me.
O Light—my Dark—once thou wast mine to see;
And now not ever shall my limbs again 1550
Feel thee! Already I creep upon my way
To hide my last of life in Hades. Thou,
Dearest of friends—thy land—thy followers—all,

May you live happy; and in your happiness,
Fortunate ever, think of me, your dead!

Exeunt CĒDIPUS, THESEUS, ANTIGONE, ISMENE,
and attendants.

Chorus

1.

If sound of my prayers may rise unto Her who is hid from sight,
If worship of mine may approach thee, the King of the shadows of
night,

Aidoneus, Aïdoneus— 1560

I entreat that this stranger

May pass right well, without sound of grief, by a painless doom,
To the hiding-place of the dead beneath, and the Stygian home.
—Though many are the sorrows that visit thee, many thy labours in
vain,
It may be, a Power that is righteous intends to uplift thee again.

2.

Hail, Queens of the realms of Earth! All hail, the unconquered
frame

Of the Hound, that crouched, we were told, at the Gate whither all
men came,

And growled from its caverns, 1570
(So the story went ever,)

As Hades' champion and guard—whose steps, I pray, may be led
Far off, when the stranger comes to the nether abodes of the dead!
—O Thou that art born of Earth, the begotten of the Deep,
Upon thee I call, the giver of unending sleep.

Enter a Messenger.

MESSENGER

Sirs, that I may, as much as possible,
Cut short my message—Cēdipus is dead; 1580
But for what there befell, there are no words
To tell it in brief space; nor was it brief,
All that was done.

1 CITIZEN

Is the poor wanderer dead?

MESSENGER

Yes, he is quit of his life trouble.

I CITIZEN

How?

Was it a heaven-sent end—poor soul—and calm?

MESSENGER

Truly the event is meet to wonder at.
First, in what fashion he set forth from hence,
Being present, you must have seen as well as I;
None of his own playing the guide for him,
But he himself shewing us all the way.
Next, when he came to the precipitous stair, 1590
Bedded in the earth with brass-bound ramps of stone,
There, upon one of the diverging paths,
Nigh to the hollowed basin where are kept
The sure abiding tokens of the bond
'Twixt Perithous and Theseus, he stood still,
And midway thence to the Thorician rock,
Hard by the hollow pear-tree and tomb of stone,
He sate him down; then doffed his grimy robe;
And then, crying to his daughters, bade them bring
Waters to wash, and pour, out of some stream;
Which twain, proceeding to the opposing slope 1600
Of green-clad Demeter, with small delay
Brought to their father that he sent them for;
And washed him clean, and decked him out, in garb
Such as is used; and when he had his pleasure,
All being in train, and nothing yet remained
Unsatisfied of that which he desired,
Jove thundered from his caverns, and the maids,
As they heard, shivered; and at their father's knees
Fell down, and wept, beating their breasts, and raised
Wailings prolonged, unceasing. He the while,
Soon as he heard the bitter note of woe, 1610
Folding his arms about them, said; "For you,
My girls, this day there is no father more;

For all things now are ended, which were mine ;
And now no longer need you bear for me
The burden of your hard tendance ; hard, indeed—
I know it, my children ; but one single word
Cancels the evil of all cares like this ;
Love, which ye had from no one, more than me ;
Of whom bereft, you for the future now
Must live what life you may.” So they all wept, 1620
Clinging to each other, mourning loud ; but when
They came to an end of wailing, and the cry
Rose up no longer, silence reigned awhile.
Then suddenly some voice shouted his name ;
So that the hair of all stood up for fear ;
For a God called him—called him many times,
From many sides at once : “ Ho, Œdipus,
Thou Œdipus, why are we tarrying ?
It is full long that thou art stayed for ; come !”
He, when he felt Heaven summoned him, bespake
That the land’s king, Theseus, should come to him ; 1630
And, when he came, said to him, “ O dear friend,
Pledge me, in the ancient fashion, your right hand
To these my children, (and you, my girls, give him yours,)
And swear—never to yield them willingly,
But to perform all that you now intend,
In kindness, ever, that is good for them.”
He, of his gentleness, agreed ; and sware,
(But not condoling,) to his guest, to do it.
And straightway as he sware it, Œdipus,
Touching with sightless hands his daughters, said :
“ Now, children, you must leave this place ; bear up 1640
In spirit, as befits your nobleness ;
Look not upon the sights you may not see,
List not the voices which you must not hear,
But with all speed depart ; let no one stay
And see the event, only King Theseus.”
While he thus spake, we hearkened, all of us ;
Then followed we the maidens, grieving sore,
With streaming tears. When we had gone apart,
After short space turning, we saw, far off—

The man, indeed, nowhere still visible—
 Only the king's self, holding up his hand 1650
 Over his face, so as to shade his eyes,
 As if some sight of terror had appeared,
 Awful, intolerable to gaze upon;
 Then, in a moment, without interval,
 We saw him kneel, worshipping Earth, and Heaven,
 The abode of Gods, both in one act, together.
 But he—what death he died, save Theseus' self
 There lives not any mortal who can tell.
 For neither any fire-fraught thunderbolt
 Rapt him, from Heaven, nor whirlwind from the sea 1660
 Stirred up to meet the moment; but some guide
 Sent from above, or depth of the earth beneath
 Opening to take him, friendly, without pain.
 For not as of one mourned, or with disease
 Grown pitiable, was his departure; but
 If any ever was so, wonderful.
 —If what I say seems folly, I can spare
 The assent of those to whom I seem a fool.

I CITIZEN

And where now are his daughters, and those friends
 Who did attend them?

MESSENGER

They, at least, not far;
 For sounds of wailing unmistakeable
 Declare them to be moving up this way.

Enter ANTIGONE and ISMENE.

I. 1.

ANTIGONE

Alas, it is for us, it is for us to rue, 1670
 Not once alone, but evermore anew,
 Unhappy that we are, the fatal strains
 Of our sire's blood implanted in our veins.
 For whom, erewhile,

We ceaselessly endured a world of toil,
And have to tell, at last, of most unmeasured ill,
Beheld and suffered, still.

I CITIZEN

But what has happened?

ANTIGONE

You can guess it, friends.

I CITIZEN

He is gone?

ANTIGONE

Yes, as one would most wish for him.
—What wonder? In whose way
Nor war nor ocean lay, 1680
But viewless regions rapt him home,
Sudden, by some mysterious doom,
While on our sight
The gloom of night,
Deathful and desolate, is come.
For how shall we sustain
Life's heavy load of toil,
Wandering o'er the billowy main,
Or on some foreign soil?

ISMENE

I know not. O that with my sire's last breath
I by some sudden death 1690
Might perish! for the life that is to be
Seems worse than death to me.

Chorus

O children, worthiest pair, with what from heaven
Of good is given
Be not too much incensed! The way by which you came
You have no cause to blame.

I. 2.

ANTIGONE

Even the ills of life, it may be, we regret.
For what indeed was no-wise charming, yet

Became, to me, a life not without charms,
The while I had my father in my arms.

O father dear,

1700

Wrapped evermore in nether darkness drear,
O not for thine old age mightest thou ever be
Unloved by her and me!

I CITIZEN

He fared—?

ANTIGONE

He fared even as he wished to do.

I CITIZEN

How was it?

ANTIGONE

Upon that foreign soil he chose
Died he! For ever laid
Low, in the kindly shade,
He left behind no tearless grief,
No measured mourning, dull and brief,
These eyes are wet
With weeping yet,
Nor know I how to find relief.
Oh not for thy desire
In a strange land to die,
Need'st thou have perished, O my sire,
Thus, with no loved ones by!

1710

ISMENE

O wretched that I am! What future fate
Me must await
And thee, my sister, lingering here alone,
And our dear father gone!

Chorus

But now he is at last thus happily
From life set free,
Cease this lamenting, friends! From evils, in some shape,
No mortal can escape.

1720

II. 1.

ANTIGONE

Back let us haste, dear sister!

ISMENE

What to do?

ANTIGONE

A longing is upon me—

ISMENE

What?

ANTIGONE

To view

The earth-bound home—

ISMENE

Of whom?

ANTIGONE

Of our sire—woe is me!

ISMENE

But is it not forbid? Do you not see?

ANTIGONE

Why should it make you chide?

1730

ISMENE

This too, that—

ANTIGONE

Well, what next?

ISMENE

Without a tomb,

Lonely, he died!

ANTIGONE

Take me to him, and slay me by his side!

ISMENE

Alas, unhappy, whither should I flee,
To live, once more, a life of misery,
In the old loneliness and poverty!

II. 2.

I CITIZEN

Dear friends, fear nought!

ANTIGONE

Where should I shelter me?

I CITIZEN

Truly there was a shelter, long ago—

ANTIGONE

How?

I CITIZEN

For your fortunes, that they should be free
From evil destiny.

1740

ANTIGONE

Nay, that I know.

I CITIZEN

What is it, then, that doubles your concern?

ANTIGONE

'Tis that I know no way for our return
To our own home.

I CITIZEN

Care not to seek it!

ANTIGONE

I am overcome

With weariness.

I CITIZEN

Time was, you were so.

ANTIGONE

Yea,

Sorely before, but now surpassingly.

I CITIZEN

Truly it was yours to stem a stormy sea!

ANTIGONE

Whither, O Jove, shall we direct our way?
Towards what point of hope—alas the day!
Doth God impel me, and forbid my stay?

1750

III.

Enter THESEUS, attended.

THESEUS

Children, cease to lament; for griefs, where
Grace from the Nether Gods awaits us,
Blessing all fortunes,
Sorrow is causeless; nay, were sin.

ANTIGONE

O son of Ægeus, we are thy suppliants.

THESEUS

For what boon, my children?

ANTIGONE

We too
Fain would look on our father's tomb.

THESEUS

Nay, the approach to it is forbidden us.

ANTIGONE

King, how say you, master of Athens?

THESEUS

He, my children, gave me commandment
That no mortal's foot should trespass
Near those precincts,
Or give name to the ark of refuge
Where he dwells; which things, he told me,
Duly observing,
I might evermore keep these confines
Free from annoyance;
And so Heaven o'erheard me swear it,
And the omniscient Oath of Jove.

1760

ANTIGONE

Well, if such be the way he willed it,
Let that fully suffice. Now send us
Back to our ancient Thebes; it may be

1770

We may ward off ruin, impendent
O'er our brethren.

THESEUS

I will do it at once, and all things,
Such as I purpose, for your service,
And his pleasure, our dead, this moment
Torn far from us; I may not tire.

Chorus

Cease; no longer upraise your wailing;
All these promises shall not fail.

Exeunt omnes.

NOTES

27. ἐξοικήσιμος, "suitable for settlement," hence "hospitable in appearance," must here mean inhabited, rather than habitable.

104. τι μείονως ἔχειν may be either "too insignificant," that is, for grace, or "not having yet suffered enough." I follow the Scholiast.

150—152. This appears to me all one question; the "conjecture" cannot refer to his being old and poor, which is self-evident; therefore it must refer to his having been born blind. I consider μακράων not as "an old man," but "one destined for long life," as in *Ant.* 987, *O. T.* 1099. I do not follow Dindorf's reading, or punctuation.

195. I follow the MSS., ἦ 'σθῶ;

381. τιμῇ καθέξον must I think embody a poetical antithesis with βιβῶν πρὸς οὐρανόν. "Shall keep down, or shall exalt to heaven, in honour." The interpretation "shall possess in honour" misses this.

458. Dindorf's προστάτισι seems to me questionable. The meaning, however, is not greatly affected by its adoption.

475. I suppose γε to be inserted after οἶδς, with many good authorities; and I read λαβῶν, not βαλῶν, at the end of the line. The Coloniate is handing to Œdipus the various implements.

513. φανέλσας I think must be significant in this context; it is the remarkable revelation of the mystery which excites curiosity.

521. Mr Whitelaw reads ἀέκων instead of ἐκῶν, in a note, but does not translate it. The difficulty is, that it anticipates the next line. Professor Jebb follows this reading, but translates, apparently, ἐκῶν. I follow Dindorf in keeping ἐκῶν, though I must allow that θεὸς ἵστω, in this context, appears misplaced.

541. I follow Hermann's explanation.

547. I follow the reading recommended by Professor Jebb (Mekler's), which seems to effect a satisfactory solution of a serious difficulty in the argument.

550. ἀποσταλεῖς seems preferable to ἐφ' ἀστάλη, because the Chorus do not yet know that Theseus will do what Œdipus wants.

588. I read κάμου, not ἦ 'μου.

657. I adopt the explanation given by Professor Postgate of ἔμπαλιν, in an interesting note on some passages in this play, which appeared in the *Journal of Class. and Sac. Phil.* x. 87.

813. I follow the MSS., not Dindorf's alteration.

858. Dindorf makes a question of this, apparently without necessity.

862. I follow Professor Jebb and others in giving this v. to the Chorus.

882. Half a line has here disappeared, but the sense seems evident.

1016. I read *ἐξεργασμένοι* (Prof. Jebb, from F. A. Schmidt,) not *ἐξηρπασμένοι*.

1073. I take *γαῖδοχον* as in *O. T.* 160. Professor Jebb's objections may possibly be met by considerations I have elsewhere urged; see note on *Phil.* 314, &c.

1076. I follow the emendation *ἀντάσειν τᾶν κ.τ.λ.* recommended by Professor Jebb.

1113. I read *κἀναπαύσετον*, with the MSS.

1118. The reading recommended by Professor Jebb (Wex's) appears to me to have for the first time given a tolerable solution of the difficulty involved in this line.

1248. I fail to see any plausibility in the supposed reference, under *ῥῖπαι*, to the stars. There is good evidence that the ancients used this name for the Rhipæan hills; and the fragment of Alcman, which calls them the "bosom of deep Night," appears tolerably conclusive as to the meaning here. Otherwise, "the blasts of Night" seems to me to have quite sufficient connotation of a northerly origin for poetical purposes.

1373. The attempt to explain the MSS. reading, by supposing *Œdipus* to quibble here on the different values of words like *ἄστυ* and *πόλις*, is to say the least unsuitable, if not disfiguring, to the context.

1424. I follow Professor Jebb in taking *ἐκφέρει* as 2nd pers. sing., mid., not 3rd pers., act.

1486. *Antigone* can hardly be intended to ask her father why he wants to keep his senses; nor yet, in view of his reply, to ask what he would have *Theseus* promise him. I take *τὸ πιστὸν* actively (see l. 1031); then reading with Hermann *ἐμφῦσαι*, and taking *φρενὶ* with *θέλοις*, which I think is justified by the fact of its repetition from the preceding line, a tolerable meaning is obtained for a very difficult line, not, I think, anywhere quite satisfactorily explained.

1570. I read *πολυξένοις*, not *πολυξέστοις*.

1662. I read *ἀλύπητον*, not *ἀλάμπετον*.

1712. I do not follow Dindorf in omitting this line.

I am not conscious of having appropriated any thing directly, in this play, from the labours of previous translators. But I had become familiar, before attempting it, with the best passages of Dean Plumptre's version.

THE LOST DRAMAS

THE LOST DRAMAS

FROM the old Greek Lexicons of Photius, Suidas, Hesychius and their brethren, from the grammatical writings of Phrynichus, Eustathius and others, and from allusions scattered over the field of later Greek literature, we derive the names of about 100 lost dramas of Sophocles. Quotations from these have also survived to us, and extracts, to the amount of about nine hundred lines in all. The total of 963 so-called fragments, as accumulated in Dindorf's *Poetæ Scenici Græci*, to which more have since been added, is made up by including hundreds of notices of single Sophoclean words, taken from the Lexicographers and grammatical writers, and also several allusions and passing notices. Omitting these, and a few of the shorter passages, either hopelessly corrupt, apparently spurious, or of no poetical importance, it has been attempted in the following selection to include everything that can fairly be considered capable of translation of these remains of Sophocles.

Of the sources from which extracts have been derived, the most important is the *Eclogæ*, or Scrapbook, of Stobæus, or John of Stobi, a village in Macedonia. He appears to have been a cultivated gentleman of the fourth or fifth century A.D., who devoted his leisure to the compilation of a large work, in several books, of Elegant Extracts from Classical Authors, arranged according to their subject-matter. The work was intended for the use of his son, whom he was educating. The third book, commonly called the *Florilegium* of Stobæus, consists of scraps of poetry, chiefly of a moralizing tendency, of which a large portion are drawn from the plays of Sophocles. Plutarch, especially in his *Moralia*, stands next in importance of these sources; and Athenæus, in the *Deipnosophistæ*, third. Of the remainder a great part are furnished by Scholiasts, that is, by the writers of old notes on the margins of manuscripts, by way of illustration to passages on which they were commenting.

No records have come down to us whereby the order of composition, among the lost dramas, can be ascertained. The attempt to group them in tetralogies has proved a failure; nor are there, except in a few cases only, any means of discovering which of the titles preserved was that of a Satyric play.

The arguments can in some cases be recovered from the mythographical writings of Apollodorus, Parthenius, and others, among Greek writers, and of Hyginus and his imitators among the Latins.

In the cases of plots drawn from the Epic Poets, they are furnished

us by Proclus. I follow an arrangement based upon that of Welcker, (see Preface) whose reference numbers I have appended to the names of the plays; those of Dindorf, *Poete Scenici Græci*, Oxf. 1851, are prefixed to the several fragments.

I take first a group of dramas on subjects belonging to Attic tradition.

I. ATTIC LEGENDS

Triptolemus, Orithyia, Tereus, Creusa or Ion, Ægeus, Phædra.

The loss of the *Triptolemus* (48) is much to be regretted. It has been argued from a passage in Pliny (*Hist. Nat.* XVIII. 12. 1) that this was one of the earliest plays by Sophocles; perhaps the very drama by which his reputation was established, when, on the bringing to Athens of the remains of Theseus, a special appointment of arbitrators was made, on the nomination of Cimon and the generals, to decide the prize between himself and Æschylus. If this were so, the interest to an Athenian audience of the subject-matter of the play may probably have contributed to the victory of Sophocles over his great rival. Triptolemus was an Attic hero, the founder of Eleusis, the place where the most sacred rites of Athenian religion were celebrated. The interest of the plot may have centred in the conspiracy of Cepheus against his life. But its principal attractions must have lain in the entry of the hero, fresh from his tour of the habitable world, riding in his flaming car, impelled by

538

Two dragons coiled about the axle tree

—in his account of strange races and distant lands, which he had visited, sowing the corn, the gift of Demeter; and in the procession to Eleusis with which the drama probably concluded. From Dionysius of Halicarnassus (*Antiq.* 1. 12) we learn how the Goddess came to Triptolemus and despatched him on his beneficent errand. From her address, describing the route he was to take, we have

535

And on the tables of your memory
Set my words down.

527

And all that lies behind you, to the right,
And all Ænotria, and the Tyrrhene gulf,
And the Ligurian land, shall welcome you.

537

Then must you turn—

Elsewhere Triptolemus himself is speaking. We have allusions to

"Italy, blest with white wheat" (529), preserved in a translation by Pliny, to Illyria (541), and to "the borders (or confines) of Carthage" (536). "Charnabon, who now rules over the Getæ" (528), we understand from Hyginus (*Poet. Astr.* 2. 14) to have given him an inhospitable reception, and slain one of his dragons, which was replaced by Demeter. There is also in Strabo (xv. p. 687) a fragment of an unnamed drama, probably belonging to this place

782

Whence I beheld, haunted by Bacchanals,
Renowned Nysa; her the hornéd God,
Iacchus, deems his foster-mother dear;
There no bird utters clamour—

and one in which there is a plagiarism from *Æsch. Pers.* 181

761

Meseemed it the two Continents approached

The purpose of his journey, the dissemination of corn-culture, accounts for allusions to "pickled fish," "millet-seed," and "beer"; and to "the cup which has no foot, and cannot be set on table" (531, 534, 533, 541); and to the same place, probably, we may refer

539

—and there, too, came,
Eldest of Gods, joyous Festivity.

An interesting passage referring to the Eleusinian procession may perhaps be added, from Plutarch (*Mor.* pp. 98. A, 102. B) as restored by Hermann;

724, 743

March, all you folk, masters of handicrafts,
Who venerate the grim-eyed Queen of Toil,
Daughter of Jove, with baskets on your heads;
Who weld the lifeless matter with strong hands
Upon the anvil, docile to your blows
Under the heavy hammer:

And this, of the final blessedness of the initiated (*Mor.* p. 21. F)

719

Thrice happy they who to the grave depart
With eyes on these ends fixed; they only, there,
Have life; to the others all things there are evil.

There seems no sufficient foundation for the opinion that this was a Satyric Drama. See Hygin. *Fab.* 147; Mythogr. Vat. II. 99; Apollod. I. 5. 2.

In the *Orithyia* (47) the ravished maiden is carried by Boreas northwards (Strabo, VII. p. 295)

655

Far over all the main, to the ends of earth,
And to night's sources, and the expanse of heaven,
The ancient garden of Phœbus

And this, perhaps, from Cicero's letters (*ad Att.* VI. 16) is taken from a description of the ravisher—

753

Not upon small fifes is he blowing, now,
But in fierce blasts, without a cheek-strap

See also Longinus *de Subl.* III. 2.

In the *Tereus* (68) Sophocles handled the tragical story of Procne and Philomela, a favourite one with him, since he alludes to it in many passages of the extant plays. (Compare Hygin. 45.) From the opening of the drama, from a speech of Procne, with which may be compared that of Deianira which opens the *Trachinie*, Stobæus has preserved for us, among several others, the beautiful passage, the most affecting perhaps in all the remains of our poet, which describes the lot of woman in a half-civilized community—

517

Now, by myself, I am nothing; yea, full oft
I have regarded woman's fortunes thus,
That we are nothing; who in our fathers' house
Live, I suppose, the happiest life, while young,
Of all mankind; for ever pleasantly
Does Folly nurture all. Then, when we come
To full discretion and maturity,
We are thrust out and marketed abroad,
Far from our parents and ancestral gods,
Some to strange husbands, some to barbarous,
One to a rude, one to a wrangling home;
And these, after the yoking of a night,
We are bound to like, and deem it well with us.

This, perhaps, Procne says to her sister—

522

—Much

I envy thee thy life ; and most of all,
That thou hast never had experience
Of a strange land.

One strophe of a Choric Ode, made up of two fragments, has come down to us ;

518, 519

We, one race of mankind, by father, by mother,
All came forth to the light of the selfsame day ;
No one man is born more great than another ;
But some are fed with a bitter bread,
And some with health, and some with wealth,
And some bend under the forceful span
Of slavery's yoke ; for the life of man
Is changed and changed, in every breeze,
By the ingenious woes of our calamities.

And this is the conclusion of the corresponding antistrophe ;

718

—But where is the grace

Of the many things that are loveliest,
If an ill-designing thought in the breast
Fosters the wealth that renders fair our race ?

To this same Chorus we may with probability assign two other scraps of lyric verse, of which the second is quoted by Stobæus as from "the same place" as the end of the first strophe given above :

692

'Tis never well, among mankind,
Great wealth with wonder to survey ;
For a man sees life decay
From him, with as brief a day
As the poplar's slender rind.

685

Might a man live, and give each hour
 Its fill of pleasure ; but the morn
 Creeps ever darkling on.

An invocation to the Sun, probably by Tereus, may have opened the Prologue—

523

Sun, thou radiance
 Foremost in honour with the sons of Thrace,
 Lovers of horses

To the scene where Procne learns her sister's fate, probably from a servant, Welcker assigns three fragments, the last quoted by Athenæus (1. p. 33. c) from an uncertain drama ;

513

Courage, speak truly, and thou shalt never stumble.

512

The whole barbarian race is money-loving.

696

O tongue, that has been silent all this while,
 How wilt thou bear to tell thy story through ?
 Sure nought is heavier than the exigence
 Under whose stress thou must perforce reveal
 The secret of our princes :

And to the Chorus, expostulating with her,

521

Terrible, Procne, truly ; all the same,
 Being mortals, we must bear with tolerance
 What Heaven ordains

520

Do not shout yet, before you see him dead.

She is then seen

525

Hastening along, and in a coloured robe

After her catastrophe a messenger sums up, in a manner little reconcilable with the sentiment usually attaching to the Sophoclean Chorus, to whom I cannot agree in assigning this passage—

514

He was a fool ; but, in resisting him
With all their might, they were worse fools than he.
One in distress who, being enraged, applies
A remedy too strong for the disease—
He is no skilful leech of maladies.

The Chorus concludes thus:

515

Mortal born must think no thought
That becomes not mortal ; this
Knowing well, that there is none
Can assign, save God alone,
Of things future, what must be.

The plot of the *Creusa* or *Ion* (70) was probably similar to that of the well-known drama of Euripides. The Chorus, consisting of hand-maids of Creusa, might sing

324

I would not offer up my vows
For wealth at home, or wedded spouse ;
Beyond the usual measure ;
For slippery are the ways—

From speeches, probably, of Ion, we have

325

And do not wonder that I hold so close,
O king, to profit ; for even those of men
Who reach old age cling fast to profiting ;
And beside riches, to mankind all else
Is second-rate ; true, there are some esteem
A man in health ; yet to me, no man poor
Appears to be in health, but always ailing.

326

The noblest life is that of righteousness ;
The best, freedom from sickness : pleasantest,
When every day one gets what one desires.

He is sent away, while the mystery is being declared—

327

Off, off my son ! this is not for your hearing.

A pretty fragment, quoted as from the *Ion*, is

298

'Tis only in Jove's gardens that we reap
The blessings of true happiness.

From other parts of the play four fragments survive :

296 (Nauck)

—it is a brave man's part
To bear all nobly.

321

This is most grievous, when, having the power
To order matters rightly, a man's own self
Brings and applies the mischief to himself.

322

But he who boldly goes to meet the ill,
His tongue is honest, and his wits secure.

323

Truly, to tell lies is not honourable ;
But when the truth entails tremendous ruin,
To speak dishonourably is pardonable.

To this play, possibly belongs also

777

Eat laurel, chew it, bite it with your teeth:

that is, by way of preparation for giving an oracle.

Theseus, the hero-founder of Athens, was a favourite personage with Sophocles. The treatment of his character in the *Cædipus Coloneus* is well known ; there is also a play on his early adventures, the *Ægeus* (71), from which we have the description, by *Ægeus*, his father, of the division of his grandfather Pandion's kingdom, preserved by Strabo (ix. p. 392)

19

My father set apart for me to pass
Away to the seaside, apportioning me
The best part of this land ; to Lycus, second,

He gave the opposite garden of Eubœa ;
 For Nisus he chose out the level ground
 Of the Scironian coast ; the land's south portion
 Pallas has got, this hard-set giant-breeder.

The fifty tall sons of Pallas were the rivals of Ægeus, and were overcome by Theseus, aided by the treachery of Leos the crier. Sophocles must have had a difficult task, to avoid wounding the susceptibilities of those among his audience who belonged to the tribes which supposed themselves to be named after Ægeus, Pallas, and Leos.

A beautiful simile has been preserved by a scholiast on Od. 11. 106 ;

24

For as among the leaves of aspen tall,
 Though nothing else be shaken, yet its head
 Some zephyr stirs, and lightly lifts its wing :

The following, from Pollux, 10. 160, points to the manner in which Theseus was made known to his father (Plut. *Vit. Thes.*), namely, by his drawing his sword "as if he designed to carve with it."

21

With a curved blade
 He struck and clave down through the ribs and chine.

Ægeus addressing Theseus, after the recognition, says

23

How did you only 'scape the highwayman
 As you went forth?

A minor character is thus announced :

22

I do not hear—I see—a countryman.

To the Legend of Theseus belongs also the *Phædra* (72), of which Stobæus quotes several fragments, whence the course of the action is to some extent traceable. This reads like a passage from the opening of the drama :

607

Not on men only, nor on women, Love
 Makes onslaught : but disturbs even the souls
 Of Gods above us, and invades the sea.

To keep him off not even almighty Jove
Has power, but yields, and submits willingly.

To the same scene, probably, must be assigned the following fine fragment of an uncertain drama, of which, indeed, the Sophoclean authorship has been doubted; but the reader shall judge whether it is not worthy of him;

678

My children, of a surety Cypris is
Not Cypris only, but bears many a name.
Death is her name, and Might imperishable,
And maniac Frenzy, and unallayed Desire,
And Lamentation loud. All is in her;
Impulse, and Quietude, and Energy;
For in the bosoms of all souls that breathe
This Goddess is instilled. Who is not prey
For her? She penetrates the watery tribe
Of fishes: she is in the four-legged breed
Of the dry land; in birds her wing bears sway,
In brutes, in mortals, in the Gods on high.
Which of the Gods does she not, wrestling, throw
Thrice over? If it be not blasphemy,
And I blaspheme not, saying what is most true,
She reigns in Jove's own bosom; without spear,
Without a sword, Cypris cuts short all counsels,
Both human and divine.

For a graphic illustration of these last two passages see the beautiful vase (British Museum, E. 325) representing Eros hovering over a hare; and compare *Antig.* 782, where I have ventured to give κτήμασι the meaning which is more usually expressed by the form κτήνεσι, that is, oxen and sheep.

We may ascribe to the Nurse

612

Sons are the anchors of a mother's life.

And to the ensuing dialogue with the Chorus

609

Pardon me, and pray keep silence. What is shame
To woman, help a woman to conceal.

611

Women, no mortal can escape disgrace,
On whom God pleases to send misery;
Stricken from Heaven, we needs must bear our
plagues.

Hippolytus says, later in the action,

605

For it is not right
A man of nobleness should please himself,
When he can take no pleasure righteously.

From a dispute, probably between him and Theseus, comes

606

For never can a city be secure
In which all justice and sobriety
Are trodden under, and a babbler wields
A rascal goad, and ministers the state.

From the description of Hippolytus, we have his hound—

619

He fawning low, laying his ears flat back—

And from the scene after the catastrophe

608

So then, no greater evil could there be
Than a bad wife; nought better, than one chaste.
But from his own experience each man judges.

610

Count, among mortals, every happy man,
You will not find one, who is really so.

Then remain two passages from the *Eclogæ Physicæ* of Stobæus, of which it does not appear that both are taken from this play. The first probably is not; it is from a dialogue of some one with Theseus, and we cannot with confidence ascribe it to Sophocles:

603

And so you lived! You did not die,
When you went under the earth!

THESEUS

Nay, Destiny
Does not compel us ere our time.

The other is part of a Chorus:

604

The looms adamantine
Of Destiny weave
All sorts of devices
Men's souls to deceive;
They cannot be measured,
They cannot be fled;
[They wait by his threshold,
They wait by his bed.]

The *Theseus* may possibly have been the same play as the foregoing; but if it is to be identified with any other, the *Ægeus* fits better with the single fragment of it, from a speech by Theseus himself, which tells how he

233

—going along the way by the sea-side
Cleansed it of savage monsters.

II. MISCELLANEOUS LEGENDS

*Niobe, Tyro, Meleager, Iolaus or Iobates, Polyidus, Thamyras,
Hipponous, The Camicians.*

The *Niobe* (46) was doubtless a remarkable play. The slaughter of the children appears to have been treated as happening at two distinct periods and places, that of the boys occurring first, at Thebes. We have in Plutarch (*Mor.* p. 760 D), an allusion to the shout of one of them, calling to his friend for help (393). Of the scene in which the maidens and their nurse lamented their death survive two pathetic passages; the first sister says—

399

I was the darling of the first of these.

And the nurse, recalling her cares,

400

With rags of thin-worn kirtles keeping them
Or warm, or cool; and taking up in turn,
After the night, toil upon toil by day.

The situation of the desolate mother so strongly impressed the poet, that he recurs to it once and again in his surviving plays. Her apostrophe to Earth, as she feels herself turning into stone—

395

I come; why dost thou call me?

was quoted, with some affectation, by Zeno the Stoic, on the occasion of the fall which caused his death.

The story of Tyro, of her unwitting union with Poseidon, and of her eventual deliverance by her twin sons, Pelias and Neleus, from the tyranny of her step-mother Sidero, became the subject of two dramas to our poet; or more probably of a single drama, the *Tyro* (49) which was twice edited. See Apollod. *Bibl.* 1. 9. The second edition opened thus—

578

What bird is this which cometh forth abroad?

From the early part of the play, in which Tyro is lamenting her case, we have one passage of some beauty, preserved by Ælian, *N. A.* 11, 18.

587

But I go mourning for my tresses lost,
Like a she-colt, caught by the husbandman,
Which in the stables to a ruthless hand
Yields from her neck an auburn harvesting;
Then, ranging in the water-meadows, sees,
Pictured beneath the surface of the stream,
The image of her shadow, with the hair
Shamefully cropped, dishevelled all, and torn;
Oh even a pitiless heart might pity her,
Such is her frenzy, shuddering for shame,
Moaning and mourning for her ravished mane.

Another puns upon the name of Sidero—

593

But she is warlike—she is one who plainly
Has used cold steel—she has it in her name!

Another, from Athenæus, XI. p. 475 A, mentions snakes as the inmates of her prison

580

—That serpents should be there, in presence,
Upon the table, with the meat and drink!

We are told that the mask of the character was disfigured to show traces of blows. The hideousness of such a make-up, here and in the last scene of the *Œdipus*, was no doubt palliated, to Greek eyes, by its appearing as a reversion to the archaic. The actors, before masks were invented, stained their faces with the lees of wine.

584

Despondency produces sickness too.

582

Do not bespatter with a shower of words
Your present fortune; it is one full meet
To be bewailed in silence.

According to Schneidewin, we should place here, and not in the *Tereus*, 520 quoted above, p. 492. But there is no death of a male victim here, in the catastrophe.

From the scene of the recognition, which was brought about by a reference to the boat in which the children were exposed, we have

581

—A soul in trouble
Sees many things when it is laid to sleep.

586

Age and delay teach all things—

583

Yet in the multitude of many men
Neither is a man found worthy, who is well-born,
Nor son of the exceeding worthless, base;
But nothing, in a mortal, is assured.

The *Meleager* (75) is a play rather conjectured to exist, from allusions to the story, than actually quoted. The following couplet may be from the prologue—

357

On CENEUS' fields a boar of monstrous size
The archer-goddess, Leto's daughter, sent.

Iolaus (67), *Iobates* (79), *Iphicles* (82) or *Iocles*; all these names have been found or conjectured. The first would be a play on the story of the Heracleids, the second on that of Bellerophon. The following fragment is ascribed to the second;

280

Not even old age has learnt to love the tomb.

And this is from either *Iolaus* or *Iocles*

282

Go with good cheer, and may you speed
As well as I well wish you!

The story of *Polyidus* or *The Seers*, (78) is as follows; Glaucus, the son of Minos and Crete, while yet a child, in chasing a butterfly, fell into a honey-pot, and was lost. His father consulted the Curetes, the priests of Jove; who reminded him of a remarkable three-coloured cow he had in his possession, white, red, and black, and promised that the man who should best say what the three colours of the cow's hide were like, should be able to restore him his son, in life. The puzzle was solved by Polyidus, a seer, who compared the cow's colours to those observed in succession in a mulberry-bush—

698

First you will see it blooming white, in flower,
Next reddened, in the rounded mulberry,
Next an old age as black as Egypt meets you—

Whereupon the task is allotted to him, of which, some one says to him—

463

You never will attain
To the summit without labour—

to find the lost boy: and this he undertakes with the help of divination. At the sacred rite, he says,

465

Were present fleece of sheep, and from the vine
 Drink offerings, and raisins well preserved ;
 Fruits of all sorts, mingled with barley-cakes,
 And olive-oil, and that most intricate
 Wax-moulded fabric of the tawny bee.

And, from the last mentioned—

467

He who came forth was the dead corpse, my bane.

The hardest part of his task yet remained, namely,

359 (Nauck)

To open the closed portal of the soul.

This he effected with the help of a herb, of which he saw the same use made by a serpent, whose companion he had himself killed in protecting the body. This queer fairy-tale was the subject of plays both by Sophocles and Euripides. There is no authority for considering them satyric dramas. See Apollod. *Bibl.* III. 3; Hygin. 136.

The special interest of the *Thamyras* (80) arises from its having been one of the plays in which, according to Athenæus, Sophocles himself acted; he sustained, we are told, the part of a harp-player in a solo, perhaps that of Thamyras himself; and from this circumstance was depicted, in the *Pœcile*, with a harp in his hand. The hero, elected king of Thrace for his skill as a musician—of the land that lies under the shadow of that

229

Thracian watch-tower, of Athoan Jove—

is said to have contended with the Muses in song; he was worsted, and forfeited to them both his eyesight, and his art. See *Il. B.* 599. In magnifying the more perfect music Thamyras had imported from Greece, some one speaks contemptuously of the old fashioned Thracian instruments—

227

Gone is the twanging melody of the shell,
 The lyre, the pipes, in which we joyed till now—

I follow Nauck's emendation so far, but the fragment is too imperfect for us to be sure of its full meaning. Another tells us of

228

The jointed lyres, the psalteries,
The dulcet zither's carven frame
Known to the Greeks—

A triangular harp or zither is also mentioned. When defeated, Thamyras is introduced taking vengeance on his instruments—

232

Breaking the gold-bound horn—
Breaking the harmony of the string-strained lyre.

To these may be added, from Plutarch, *Moral.* p. 1093 D, a fragment unintelligible as it stands, describing a poetical frenzy—

747

—by a mordant monster muse-inspired
Do I burst forth; and to the rock I come—
—from the lyre, and from the strains

“Which Thamyras sings with art preeminent”—See Professor Jebb's note on *O. T.* 1220.

In the *Hippionous* (81), it is told us, contrary to his usual habit, Sophocles allowed the Chorus to speak, as in a Parabasis, out of character. Some one addresses the unfortunate Periboea—

284

Wherefore hide nothing; for all things are disclosed
By the all-beholding and all-hearing Time.

She says—

285

I come from the Olenian pasture-land.

281 (Nauck)

For saving medicines are not everywhere
To be discovered, but by forethought only.

For the story see Apollod. *Bibl.* 1. 8.

The scene of the *Camicians*, or *Minos*, (83) is laid at Camicus, afterwards Agrigentum, where Dædalus found refuge after his escape from Crete. Minos pursues him, and pleads against him before Cocalus the king of the country. He describes how Dædalus came to him for

refuge after the slaughter of Perdix, and relates his ingratitude. Dædalus defends himself, and tells how he escaped from Crete; on wings, to wit, that

303

Lift me, and bear my frame right faithfully.

The catastrophe must have been the scalding to death of Minos in his bath by the daughters of Cocalus. Hygin. 40, 44. Other passages are—this, of the shells through which the clue of the labyrinth was suspended

299

—Of this sea-snail, my daughter,
If we can find one—

302

To those who move not, fortune is no friend.

304

He who when young cares nought for song
Is lost to all the time that's past,
And dead to all that follows.

This last is by some given to Euripides.

III. STORY OF ATHAMAS

Athamas, Phrixus, Ino.

There is a series of plays upon the story of Athamas and his family, preliminary to the Argonautic Cycle. Of the two bearing the name of Athamas only one line has survived. The first play (51) we must suppose to have embodied the story of Nephele; and Athamas, in the catastrophe,

5

Being childless—wifeless—and without a home

stands crowned with the sacrificial wreath before the altar of Zeus Laphystius—a celebrated situation with the ancients, which gave its name to the play—about to be slain by the Achæans in requital for the supposed death of Phrixus. The subject may have been suggested by the remarkable passage Herod. VII. 197, which gives one version of the final event. The second *Athamas*, unless it were merely a new edition of the first, dealt probably with the story of Ino, and may in that case be identified with it (52). A wonderful story told in Hygin. 4, is more probably the plot of the *Ino* of Euripides.

The *Phrixus* (50) has also perished, but with the exception of one spirited line—

646

Hound-like they howled, as it were whimpering
(Blomfield's emendation). There is also a second—

647

Goal of our journey, precincts of this land—
whence we may conclude that the subject was the fate of Nephele's children in Colchis.

IV. THE ARGONAUTS

The Lemnian Women, Phineus, Tympanistæ, Women of Colchis, Scythians, Rootgatherers.

This series of plays belongs to the story of Jason and the Argonauts. Their adventures in Lemnos are the subject of the *Lemnian Women* (53); in which one strange line seems to refer to an image of a cow, set up in the island—

348

—Athos shadows o'er
The broad back of the Cow of Lemnos' isle.

The *Phineus* (54), a play twice edited, yields nothing but some allusions to a "dried Egyptian mummy," (636) and to the "water of the Scythian Bosphorus," (637) and the comparison of an eye to a tavern-door, (635) which savours of comedy. The *Tympanistæ*, which may possibly be the second edition of the *Phineus*, affords Stobæus a pretty bit. We may suppose that Idothea, the second wife of Phineus, is coaxing the Argonauts to remain;

563

Heigh-ho! what greater joy could you receive
Than to reach land, and then, under some roof,
In slumberous mood, listen to the pouring hail!

Aristophanes, *Plut.* 635, quotes from this play

634

Find a kind healer in Asclepius.

In the *Women of Colchis* (55) we have the exploits of Jason, and the loves of him and Medea. She says

313

—Do you promise, with an oath,
To return kindness?

She tells him the story of Prometheus (315).

From a scene with a messenger, who relates how Jason has fared, we have

319 *a*

The flame-blast started forth
Upon its track unfraught with radiance

where I follow Professor Postgate's excellent emendation ; and

319 *b*

You would have been surprised to see
The golden blast of flame, shining from far.

A passage of which part is lost tells how "with limbs of brass they breathe out from their lungs—and their nostrils blaze"—(320). Æetes then says—

314

Did not the offspring of the earth forth-spring?
Mess. Ay truly, bristling fierce, with a plumed crest,
In arms of brass, forth from their mother's womb
Dauntless they sprang!

No special place can be assigned to the saw

311

'Tis well one who is mortal should so think
As fits mankind.

In the *Scythians* (56) the fortunes of Medea are further pursued. An interlude in tetrameters speaks of her and Absyrtus; whose fate, as may be conjectured from the name of the play, constituted its principal subject.

491

For they sprang not from one wedlock; but the later-
born, the lad,
Was the offspring of a Nereid; and the girl Idyia had,
Long before, old Ocean's daughter

From the *Rootgatherers*, or *Pelias* (57), there is a single line which probably stood thus originally (Welcker's reading)

433

'Twas no white milk that fed her infancy!

We have also two fine anapæstic fragments. The first is an incantation, found in a Scholiast on Apollonius Rhodius;

480

Sun our Master, and Holy Flame,
Spear of Hecate, the way-side Dame,
Borne by her, through Olympus riding,
Or in sacred cross-ways of Earth abiding,
Crowned with oak-wreaths, and coils enwoven
Of savage serpents—

The other depicts, as by a flash of lurid lightning, the terrible enchantress in the wood: its preservation is due to Macrobius;

479

She turned her eyes from the deed
Backward—she cropped the weed—
She squeezed forth the juice milk-white,
She caught it in coffers bright,

.
And the boxes' covers hide
The pieces of root inside,
Which she, with clamour and crying,
Naked, was chopping, plying
Her sickle's brazen blade.

V. STORY OF TELEPHUS

Alceadæ, Mysians, Telephus.

There are two dramas, possibly three, on the story of Telephus. The *Alceadæ* (76) has survived in a large number of comparatively uninteresting fragments, from which Welcker has conjectured with much ingenuity that the plot was something as follows. Aleus, king of Tegea, having caused to be exposed Telephus, the son of Auge his daughter, by Hercules, on account of an oracle, which declared that the son of Auge should be the death of his own sons, the infant Telephus has been suckled by a hind upon the mountains, and returns to Tegea,

to claim the honours of his descent at the hands of his uncles, Hippothous and Nereus. He relates the story of his miraculous foster-nurse; how

110

—a wild antlered hind came slowly down
From the precipitous hills—

.
Lifting her nostrils and her antler-tyes
Softly she stole—

and a long debate ensues, to which the following may be ascribed:
Telephus says—

98

Then indeed all the affairs of life grow rotten,
When men are minded to cure wrong with wrong.

99

It is not easy to withstand the just.

100

To feign is base, and is not gentlemanly.

101

Yea, and a righteous tongue has mighty strength.

On the other side of the question we have

102

Be silent, boy; silence has many beauties.

103

Why make you
Matter of this for many speeches more?
Excess of words is grievous everywhere.

104

Search not out all things; it is good that much
Should be unknown.

Telephus complains that the cause is going against him, in words which have by no means lost force, with many centuries of practical application;

109

Riches gain friends, gain honours, too, for men,
Yea, gain a seat most pleasant, in the chairs
Of topmost sovereignty. Moreover none
Grow hostile toward riches ; and even those
Who have so grown renounce their enmity.
For riches have a formidable way
Of creeping into spots inviolable
And hard to reach ; and into places where
A poor man could not, even if he came thither,
Obtain what he desires. An ugly body
And of bad fame riches make wise of speech
And comely to behold. To them alone
Belongs the power of good and evil cheer,
And to conceal misfortunes.

He seems finally to abandon the attempt to establish his descent by proof.

107

Pause there. It is sufficient to be called
This father's son—if I am really so.
And if I am not, so much the worse for me.
Repute is stronger than reality.

He relies on his apparent worth and prowess,

108

Are bastards equal to legitimate?
All excellence has a legitimate birth.

He threatens violence at last—

106

No man, I think ; but look, whether it be not
Better, even impiously, to beat one's foe,
Than to be told I am myself a slave.

After this would follow the slaughter of the Aleadæ ; the Chorus would naturally take their part, and lament the catastrophe ;

105

Nor know I what to say, to cure it ;
When the good give place
To those who are base,
What city could well endure it ?

How the play ended, we are not told ; but possibly by the appearance of Hercules, and the announcement on his part, of his paternal relation to Telephus.

In *The Mysians* or *Telephus* (77) the fortunes of Telephus are further pursued. He seems to have been sent to Mysia by his father, in order that he might find his mother Auge, who had been adopted by Teuthras. The plot must have turned upon the narrow escape Telephus there had of being wedded to his own mother ; but all ends happily, with a recognition between the mother and son (Hygin. 100.) On landing, he is answered by some passer-by—

360

Sir, Asia the whole continent is called,
The Mysians' state, though, is named Mysia.

He replies ;

358

How sweet it is to the unfortunate,
Even for a little period, to forget
The ills that stand about them !

Here is an anticipation of Milton ;

361

And many a Phrygian dulcimer, and crash
Harmonious, of the Lydian psaltery,
Sounds to it, in linked measures, long drawn out.

Asiatic properties are introduced ;

362

Armlets, tiaras, and an ermine robe.

And the Chorus, towards the conclusion, say

359

No man from toil has perfect rest ;
He who has least, is happiest,

VI. STORY OF PERSEUS

Acrisius, Danae, Andromeda, Larissæans.

Argos furnished three cycles of legend previous to the Trojan war, from which Sophocles took subjects. In the *Acrisius* (59), with which the *Danae* may perhaps be identified, but not, I think, the *Larissæans*, we have the discovery and condemnation of the princess. To the early part of the play must belong

58

Some one calls: listen! Or do I bark in vain?
To him who is in fear everything rustles.

59

No falsehood lingers on into old age.

60

A runaway slave, who has had fetters clapped
Upon his limbs, in all things, obviously,
Speaks what will please his master.

(Nauck's reading.) From the latter part we have—

62, 61

Brief speech becomes those who think soberly,
In presence of their mothers and their sires:
Specially a maiden, and of Argive race,
Whose glory is in silence, and few words.

One fragment is quoted as from the *Danae*; Acrisius says

176

Your trouble I know not; but one thing I know,
If this boy lives, I perish.

63

Lady, cheer up; most of our ills, blowing loudly
In dreams by night, grow milder when 'tis day.

This is probably from a dialogue between Danae and Acrisius;

64, 65

—No man loves life like him that's growing old.
—Yet life, my child, is the best boon of all.
—Yet the same persons cannot die twice over.

66

Nor can the living aid the man that's dead,
Seeing that himself must die.

The *Andromeda* (60) survives in the question to Perseus

129

On steeds, or wherries, are you voyaging?
A bold trope is

130

Nowise to dread fresh-reeking letters.
There is also an interesting passage on sacrifices ;

132

For the State

She, as a bloody passover, was slain ;
For savages have the custom, from of old,
To pay to Cronos human sacrifice.

(Scaliger's emendation.)

In the *Larissæans* (61) the story of Acrisius is concluded. Besides one forcible line

67

How all men strive to shun a tyrant's face !

there are two passages from a speech of Perseus, or of a messenger, describing the catastrophe at the court of Teutamidas ;

68

And many a contest for all comers he
Proclaims; setting forth cauldrons for a prize
Of beaten brass, and hollow drinking-cups
Of solid silver, or of parcel-gilt,
To the number of twice sixty.

69

And to me, who threw third, a man of Dotis
Came close, named Elatus, in the disk-throwing.

VII. WARS OF ARGOS AND THEBES

Epigoni, Eriphyle, Alcmaeon, Amphiaraus.

Of dramas on subjects from the wars of Argos and Thebes there are, besides the three plays on the story of Œdipus which have come down to us, first the *Epigoni*, (41), which however it is difficult to distinguish from the *Eriphyle*, and the *Alcmaeon* (42). One of them must have been a drama on the slaughter of his mother by Alcmaeon, in requital of her betrayal of his father Amphiaraus. To the opening of this play Welcker assigns the following singular fragment quoted by John of Damascus; the Sophoclean authorship of which is however doubtful.

779

Now that the office of the God, my sons,
Has all been duly done, let us begone
Unto the school, the Muses' nursery.
We must be gaining something every day,
As long as we can better what we know.
Boys, without fee, know how to do amiss,
Learning it of themselves right easily;
While good, not even if they go to school
Know they by heart, but hardly compass it.
This, then, let us regard, and let us toil,
O children, that we may not seem to be
The sons of untaught men, yea, of a sire
Who dwells in foreign regions.

To fit this passage into some known subject of tragedy, we must find a pious father long absent from home, and a group of sons, of an age to be addressed by a tutor, or by one of their own number, as above. This agrees with the situation of Alcmaeon, Amphilochus, and the other sons of Amphiaraus. The fate of the father is described—

781

The soil of Thebes
Split, and received him, with his arms, his team,
Chariot and all.

From an address to Eriphyle comes

195

O thou unscrupulous, and worse! O woman!
No other of all evils mortals own
Is there, or ever can be, worse than—woman!

Y, A,

33

Other fragments cannot so easily be placed ;

194

For in the case of those whom envy follows,
Dishonour is more apt to conquer them
In shameful actions, than in honourable.

From the *Eriphyle* are quoted :

202

But virtue's treasures are alone secure.

203

For brave men's breasts grow not effeminate.

204

But when it is not lawful
To speak with freedom what is for the best,
And the worse counsel in a state prevails,
There errors lead astray the common weal.

205

How can I, a mortal, fight with Providence?
When the pinch comes, hope is of no avail.
(Nauck's reading.)

206

Keep to good words, now you attain old age.

207

—Away !

Sleep is physician of that malady.

209

O tongue, among what people thou hast honour
Where words are of more force than actions !

The following are ascribed to the *Alcmaeon* ;

95

I would that I might see you aiming well,
Hitting your mark in honest sentiments.

And from a dialogue between Alcmaëon and Adrastus, given by Plutarch, without author or play:

—You are her brother,
Who slew her spouse!

—And you the murderer
Of your own mother, who bare you!

There is also a Satyric drama on the story of *Amphiaraus*. The fragments are

116

He who is, to this prophet-company,
As crab to pinna—

122

Dogskin, and hide of a dun cow that lowed—

It is not clear what incident in the story of *Amphiaraus* could have been made a subject for burlesque, or how such a play could well have been associated with a trilogy on the subject of the Theban war.

VIII. LEGENDS OF THE HOUSE OF ATREUS

Ænomaus, Atreus or The Mycenæans, Thyestes.

In the *Ænomaus* (62) the winning of Hippodamia by Peleus, and the death of Myrtilus the charioteer, constituted the action. From the threats of the cruel *Ænomaus* we get three words

420

Having afforded, in his scalp cut off,
A napkin, Scythian-fashion!

The fierce Hippodamia declares her love for Pelops,—in the best lines of all those preserved to us by Athenæus

421

A touch of love so winning in his face
Has he—a certain lightning of the eyes;
First he himself is kindled, then me too
He inflames all through; measuring his glance by
mine,
Even as the craftsman's ruler is laid straight,
While he marks out the line.

From the scene in which the plot is laid comes

419

But when an oath is added, then the soul
Is made more careful; for it has two things
To guard against; both the reproach of friends,
And sin against the gods.

Pelops must have listened to the warning reminding him of the frustrated anticipations of mother after mother, that

418

—she would have borne a son
Swifter than he; she one, swifter than he.

And this being in vain—

422

—I see you, with a scraper,
Clipping from a bay horse his staring coat.

Two fragments besides contain some poetry :

423

Were I an eagle soaring high,
So might I fly
Over the barren silvery main,
Far as the swell of the ocean plain—

424

The breezes blow—but the hen marks them not,
Save when the time is come for her to lay.

We are told that Æschines the orator sustained, when on the boards, the part of CEnomaus in this play.

Of *Atreus* or *The Mycenæans* (63) we have only, from the quarrel of Atreus and Thyestes—

144

No, by his cowardice I swear,
On which he battens, being himself a woman,
With men for foes !

And from the uncertain fragments

764

The boys whom I begat he has destroyed.

And perhaps, referring to the portent of the sun's turning backward

771

But every man respects

Him who turns back the circle of the sun.

Thyestes in Sicyon (64, 65) is another drama which appears to have been twice edited. At least it is not easy, from the story in Hyginus, 88, to which we must refer, to collect the material for two separate dramas. The fragments are uninteresting, except this description of the fabulous vine of Eubœa, preserved by a Scholiast on the *Phænissæ* of Euripides:

239

—For there is a land, Eubœa,

By the sea-side; there grows ephemeral

The vine of Bacchus; first in morning bright

The place luxuriates with fair-petalled flowers;

Next, mid-day fills up the interior mass

Of the unripe fruit; then comes the afternoon,

And the branch takes a darker hue; at even

All the fair-flourishing vintage is cut down,

And ferments into wine.

From Stobæus come a handful of the moralizing extracts in which he revels;

234

Not Ares, even, withstands necessity.

235

Let us be going with speed. It cannot be

Blame should e'er fasten on a righteous haste.

236

It has annoyances, I know: but still,

We must endeavour to endure, as best

We may, the hard necessities of life.

We needs must gain some healing, from such methods.

237

For even in words there is a pleasure, when

They cause oblivion of our present ills.

238

—Though an old man : but sense, and skill to adorn
At need, are wont to accompany old age.

A sophistical fragment, more in the manner of Euripides, I derive from Nauck's edition, fr. 227 :

For none is wise save him to whom God pays
honour ;
But he who looks towards heaven, even though it
bid him
Overstep right, must set himself to obey ;
For nought is shameful, when prescribed by heaven.

IX. STORIES FROM THE CYPRIA

Alexander, Ulysses Furens, Lovers of Achilles, Scyrian Women, Demand of Helen, Iphigenia, Muster of the Achæans, Shepherds, Troilus, Palamedes.

In a well-known passage of Athenæus (VII. 3, p. 277) the fondness of Sophocles is noted for subjects drawn from the Trojan cycle of the Epic poets ; and, as is further remarked by the author of the Life of Sophocles, especially from Homer's *Odyssey*. About 40 plays in all belong to these classes. The ten above-mentioned belong to the Cypria, or story previous to the *Iliad*. The *Alexander* (1) seems to have been a play on the recognition of Paris, frs. 90, 91. From the *Ulysses Furens* (2), a play on the subject of the feigned madness of Ulysses, as detected by Palamedes, we have, probably spoken by Agamemnon,

411

Now you know all ; I have spoken as I was bidden ;
For, in the style of the Argive tongue, a tale
Is brief, even to conciseness.

The adventures of Achilles in Scyros occupied two plays, one Satyric, from which comes a celebrated simile, which fortunately attracted the attention of Stobæus—

162

This love-disease is a well-pleasing pain ;
I might compare it, not amiss, to boys
Who, when the frost appears, under clear skies,
Grasp in their hands a solid icicle ;

Who find, at first, charms in its novelty ;
 But, in the end, neither will the thawing lump
 Permit itself to be let go, nor yet
 The prize remain, with comfort, in their hold.
 So lovers often are, by this same Desire,
 Driven to be busy at once, and to refrain.

Peleus says of Thetis—

163

What labour had I not to undergo?
 A lion—and a serpent—water—fire !

A dog is addressed—

166

You, Boar-catcher ! You whelp of Pelion !

Nestor, or Ulysses perhaps ;

167

To him, whose tongue flows down with honey

Achilles himself :

168

He, in invulnerable panoply,
 The work of Vulcan, there

169

—from his eyes

Darts javelins—

The *Scyrian Women* (3) no doubt followed the Epic story, introducing Thetis, Ulysses, Lycomedes, Deidamia, and perhaps Diomedes. Ulysses chides Achilles thus—

497

Thou that dost quench thy race's brilliant light,
 Born of a father of all Greeks the first,
 Fawn'st thou ?

Lycomedes, probably, bewails the conditions of old age ;

500

There is no burden like a life prolonged ;
 To extreme old age all ills are natural,
 Mind gone, work useless, vain imaginings.

The reply must, it seems, be assigned to Diomedes ;

501

If we could cure ills by bewailing them,
Or raise, by weeping, a dead man to life,
Then gold would be less precious than our sorrow;
But as it is, old man, these remedies
Are ineffectual to restore to light
One hidden in the grave ; else, my own sire
Would have been brought up to the day again,
So far as tears could do it. .

Either Lycomedes or Thetis pleads

498

For that war loves to prey upon the young.

And either the same, or Achilles himself, urges—in true sea-faring style ;

499

In good sooth, sailors are unfortunates,
Whom neither God nor Genius could reward
With as much money as were meed for them ;
A losing folk are they, who either save,
Or gain, or lose, ever, by hazarding
Upon slight chances far-sought merchandize.

The subject of the *Demand of Helen* (7) seems to have been the expedition of Ulysses and Menelaus to Troy for that purpose, previous to the sailing of the fleet. We have first, a touch of Helen herself, who hears her husband's voice, his presence being as yet unknown to her ;

186

Somehow the very accent on his tongue
Wafts me the fragrance of Laconian speech.

Menelaus says, almost certainly in this play, according to Plutarch—

713

But my fate ever in a frequent round
Turns, of a God, and changes character.
Even as the moon's appearance in one shape
Cannot continue for two nights the same,

But from the invisible comes forth at first,
 Beauteous in its new form, then rounding it ;
 And soon as ever it appears most brave,
 Again dissolves and comes to nothingness.

From this play, too, Plutarch probably took a graceful snatch of chorus, in which there rises before us a momentary vision of the banks of the Eurotas, and the girls running races in the meadow—

791

—And her, the maid
 Whose yet untrailing Spartan skirts flap free
 Round her bared limbs—the young Hermione.

A line ascribed to Euripides under this title, who however does not seem to have written such a play, is by Welcker claimed for Sophocles : Helen is speaking ; Hermione is supposed not to be present ;

But I was not a traitress, O my child.

Ulysses, addressing the Trojans, is cheapening what he would obtain (Hermann's emendation)—

187

And if we carry a woman off, who paints,
 Vexing her faded cheek with pencilling
 Deeply worked in—

Helen, perhaps at this insult, loses patience :

185

"Twere best for me to drink bull's blood at once,
 And not to go on being abused by them !

This play appears to be the same that is called in the argument of the Ajax *The Rape of Helen* (20). Another, the *Marriage of Helen*, of which nothing intelligible survives, was apparently a Satyric Drama.

In the *Iphigeneia* (4) we have Ulysses again, expostulating with Clytæmnestra (Porson's emendation)

289

A mind of genuine wisdom is a thing
 A man should cling to, as polypuses fix
 Their body to a rock

And a proverb

A vinegar jar is a bad honey-pot.

Of the next fragment only the first line appears rightly to belong to Sophocles. The Chorus say—

288

For easy leisure brings forth nothing good,
Nor any God assists the indolent.

A lyric passage, referred to a play called *Clytæmnestra*, not elsewhere noticed, is by Welcker assigned to this play, and supposed to be descriptive of Clytæmnestra's despair.

310

Some Antæus, as it were,
See ye not, involving her,
And breathing terror, as of Hecate,
The Antæan Goddess

But the passage is corrupt, and the meaning cannot be ascertained with certainty.

The *Achæorum Syllogus* or *Muster of the Achæans* (5) has usually, but I think erroneously, been identified with the *Syndeipni* or *Feasters*. The only reason for this identification is, that Athenæus, in one place, gives as his authority for a quotation "Sophocles in the Achæans' Syndeipnon."—*Syndeipnon*, the "Dinner party," is several times given as an alternative name for *Syndeipni*. Postponing for the present the discussion of this passage, and of the fragments ascribed to the *Syndeipni*, it may be proved, from the passage in Plutarch numbered (152) below, and by a passage quoted by Welcker from a Herculanæan MS., that Sophocles did write a drama on the story, preserved by Aristotle (*Rhet.* II. 26) of the muster of the Greeks at Tenedos, and the indignation of Achilles, when not invited, or invited too late, to their banquet. To this subject all the fragments quoted as from the *Achæorum Syllogus* seem perfectly appropriate; while those quoted as from the *Syndeipni*, or *Syndeipnon*, admit more easily, as will be hereafter shown, of a different concatenation. The circumstance that a proverb arose out of the story of the Anger of Achilles, in which the word "deipnon," for dinner, occurred, may perhaps account for the two plays having been confounded together.

Ulysses, probably, addresses Agamemnon ;

150

Take you the writing tablets ;
Read, on your throne, if any is absent, who
Joined in the oath.

Achilles, perhaps in conversation with an embassy, is meditating a desertion of the fleet ;

151

The crews already with their punting-poles
Direct the keel along the favouring way
Of our night-voyage.

Ulysses intervenes ;

152

You are not angered
About the banquet ; but you see already
The abodes of Troy—and tremble !

And again,

I know what 'tis you flee from ; not the slight ;
But—Hector is at hand ! ah ! 'tis unsafe
To tarry !

I follow Welcker in not ascribing to this play the spirited fragment (153), for which, and for the extant passages ascribed to the *Syndeipni*, see post, pp. 529, 538.

The *Pæmenes* or *Shepherds* (6) is known to have been a drama on the landing of the Greeks in Troia, and the self-devotion of Protesilaus. A graceful element in the plot has been preserved to us by an accident. Two Byzantine writers, frs. 127, 459, mention a particular Persian word as having been used by Sophocles, one ascribing it to this play, the other to an "Andromache," elsewhere unmentioned. Hence Welcker has plausibly conjectured that Andromache was a personage in this drama : and it is easy to see that her presence, as the loving wife of the devoted (and here victorious) Trojan hero, would heighten the tragic interest attaching to the fate of the defeated champion of the Greeks, celebrated as he was, above all others, for the love of his absent wife Laodamia. By way of prologue some one describes the Grecian host landing ;

445

For in the early dawn, ere I beheld
Any of the stall-men bringing fresh plucked fodder

To the she-goats, I saw an army march
To the rock by the sea shore—

From the same speech perhaps, comes a piece of local colour, one of several traces of which, in single words, have survived :

446

—there 'tis the native tunny-fish
Passes the winter, in the Hellespont
Hard by; in summer the Bosporian folk
Have it in season; 'tis their frequent food.

The Chorus of shepherds, relating their peaceful mode of life, now interrupted by war, say, of their flocks

447

—since for their sakes we slave
Who are their masters; and to them, though dumb,
We must give heed.

To them also may belong two snatches of pastoral ditty

962

The dams that are with their young,
And the she-goats, would display
Their new-born at their breast.

466 (Nauck)

Where neither dun ewe's rustic shepherd

Here also we must place a fragment sometimes ascribed to the *Peleus*, the first letter only of the reference being preserved ;

438

With wicker baskets wars upon the race
Of purple-fish.

The slaughter of Cynus by Achilles was introduced, in order, apparently, to restore the balance of victory to the Greeks; the principal tragic interest must however have remained with the fall of Protesilaus, since Cynus is represented as bragging of his style of fighting in a manner the reverse of elegant (938). It seems indeed to have resembled the Parisian *savate*. To the same speech may belong

448

And strike into his jaws a chill
After his noonday fever

Other fragments are (Nauck's reading)

449

—there is no wound I know of
That can be healed by speech

450

'Tis pleasant to essay one's hand in fight
Till it grows numb with striking—

This is Hector's; the Chorus, after the fall of Cynus, sing

451

From each wall
To their fall
Shake the topstones which Poseidon laid.

The *Troilus* (8) has almost entirely perished. Some one says of Peleus, by way of prelude to an unfavourable mention of his son,

548

—So it was,
He joined himself in an unspeakable match,
Embracing Thetis, goddess multiform.

After the death of the young prince, the old eunuch, his attendant, says—

551

—I have lost
The manly boy, my master!

And the Chorus, perhaps—

560

We pass on to the wells and watering places
to wash the corpse.

The only important quotation from the *Palamedes* (9) has commonly been assigned to the *Nauplius*, though without authority, and assumed

to be a continuation of the remarkable fragment (379). But the statement of Eustathius to the contrary is too clear to be thus set aside.

380

Did he not through God's favour put away
Scarcity from them, and find out for them
Pastimes most clever, when they sat down tired
With threshing the sea surge—draughtsmen and dice,
A pleasant solace in their idleness?

Welcker suggests that this is taken from a speech by Palamedes, speaking of himself in the third person.

X. STORIES FROM THE ILIAD

The Captives, The Phrygians.

It is singular that the Iliad should have afforded Sophocles so few of his plots. The extant plays show that he was familiar with the poem, especially with the first book, and with the more famous passages. It is possible that he felt the acquaintance of his spectators with its scenes and language to be in excess of the degree most conducive to interest in dramas founded upon classic legend. There are only two, which can with any likelihood be said to have been drawn from the Iliad.

In regard to the *Captives* (23) I find myself obliged to differ from Welcker, who has allowed his imagination full scope in the delineation of a plot, of which the Death of Astyanax, and the distribution of the Trojan women among the conquerors of Troy, are the main features. He has overlooked the mention of "Mynes and Epistrophus," fr. 57, from which, comparing *Il.* II. 692, I conclude, with Bergk, that the subject of the drama was the story of Chryseis and Briseis. This is confirmed by the fragment

37

Cilla and Chrysa I inhabit, here

(Meinecke's emendation) which belongs, no doubt, to a speech of Apollo, probably a prologue. Compare *Il.* I. 37. Chryses is, no doubt, the subject of the next scrap—

43

But the old man put on clogs bound round with linen.

And Calchas, perhaps, of the next;

32

A purger of the army, and well skilled
In his concoctions

The next compares a shield, with dints of many spears, to a half mould, full of air bubbles. It is a bold thing to suggest a new emendation, after Bentley has done his best; but *πύκνον χατέϊ*, for *πύκνον πατέϊ*, one reading of Pollux, is as good, perhaps, as his *πυκνομματέϊ* for *πυκνώματι*, the better reading.

33

The shield, like a half-mould, is full of hollows.

We may perhaps ascribe this line to a speech of Achilles vaunting his deeds, and the next,

34

There has been taken from thee, as it were,
A reed out of thy lyre

to one of Patroclus, condoling with him for the loss of Briseis. Other fragments are

35

A scorpion watches behind every stone.

39

If I, being small, have conquered what is—little!

49

From one poor cup a second time I poured

The *Phrygians* (10) seems clearly to have been a play on the Ransom of Hector. Priam says

649

For O my son, Ares delights to slay
The noble and the good; but the tongue-valiant,
Avoiding mischief, are beyond annoy;
For Ares makes no booty of the base.

XI. STORIES FROM THE LITTLE ILIAD AND TAKING OF TROY

*The Æthiopians, Philoctetes in Troia, Dolopians, Lacænæ,
Laocoon, Locrian Ajax, Polyxena.*

The Little Iliad and Taking of Troy afforded subjects for many plays: the *Ajax* and *Philoctetes* among them. *The Æthiopians* (11) no doubt had Memnon for its hero. A play under his name, probably identical with this, is mentioned in the argument of the *Ajax*.

26

Wherefore all this I say to please thee, not
To force thee; thou the while, as do the wise,
Praise what is honest, stick to what brings profit.

27

Black-a-vised wasp-waists, with a four-winged body
In prison bands.

These, we are told, are ants: it is, perhaps, a simile for the Myrmidons.

The *Philoctetes in Troia* (14) was no doubt an earlier play than the *Philoctetes* in Lemnos which has come down to us. The fragments seem to show that it did not form part of one trilogy with the other.

626

Death is the last physician of disease.

627

—that you may not be overcome
With the bad smell of me.

631

—the voiceless inarticulate
Music of oxen

The *Dolopians* (15) is identified by Welcker with the *Phanix*: he supposes it to have been a drama on the subject of the fetching of Neoptolemus from Scyros. From the second we have

643

the thorny artichoke
Fills all the glebe

Part of a description, apparently, of Scyros; and from the first (Toup's emendation)

184

He might be like a hare, that in his form
Has a poor runaway roof to cover him.

The *Lacæne* (16) is easily identified as a play on the fetching of the Palladium from Troy. The scene is before the house of Paris. Either Diomed or Ulysses describes the adventure;

336

—and we entered on
A tunnel, narrow, and not free from mire.

Either Helen or one of her Laconian attendants exclaims

339

By the Laconian Twins!
Yea by Eurotas also! By the Gods
In Argos, and at Sparta!

Apparently Paris discovers them, and is persuaded by some one to avoid a conflict;

337

For Heaven will never—if a man may say it—
Approve in Phrygians, that they should begin
Like insolence with Argives: in this battle
Contend not thou with force!

(Madvig's and Nauck's readings.) The next is from a Chorus

339

So shall ye make to cease from daily woes and parch-
ing misery

To this play Welcker refers the spirited passage quoted by Herodian as a specimen of that figure in rhetoric, well known to parliamentary speakers, by which a personal insult is conveyed under cover of a refusal to say or believe anything so monstrous. Ulysses says of Diomed, with whom we must suppose him to have quarrelled, or feigned a quarrel,

153

But I will say—nothing injurious to you!
Not—that you have been driven forth fugitive
From your ancestral country; not—that Tydeus
Sojourns in Argos, as a foreigner,
Because he killed a blood-relation; not—
How before Thebæ he cut off the head,
And gnawed it, of the son of Astacus,
Cannibal-fashion!

Of the *Laocoon* (17) we have the curious information from Servius that Sophocles gave names to his serpents; Porcis and Charibœa, apparently. It seems likely that their metamorphosis into human shape formed part of the action, or narration. From the scene pre-luding the sacrifice to Poseidon, we have

340

And a street altar glows with smoky flame
Through drops of myrrh, barbarian, of sweet smell.

Reflecting on the supposed departure of the enemy, some one says

343

For of toil past there is no reckoning more.

Compare, from the uncertain fragments,

672

Labours are sweet, when labour is o'er past.

From the sacrificial hymn we have

341

Thou, Poseidon, who art lord
O'er the cliffs, or glassy wave
Of the wind-beset Ægean,
On the lofty crags abiding
Of all harbours—

And from the concluding scene, the speech of a messenger, found in Dionysius of Halicarnassus ;

342

Now at the gates Æneas, goddess-born,
Bearing his father on his shoulders, stands ;
Whose silken gown is stained with blood, that flows
Down from the wounds inflicted on his frame
By thunderbolts. He gathers in a ring
All the full muster of his house-servants,
And Phrygians in a swarm beyond belief
Follow him, willing to be emigrants.

Of the *Ajax Locrus* (21), we have

11

If thou didst harm, then thou must suffer harm ;
and the Golden Eye of Righteousness
 Sees and rewards the unrighteous.

The bold imagery of the second line caused it to be frequently quoted. Other relics are—

12

Kings become wise in wise men's company.

13

Man is a shadow and a breath, no more.

16

A panther-skin, a Libyan buff-jerkin
 Stripped from a spotted whelp.

This last was the sign hung up at the door of Antenor, the Trojan traitor, to save him from violence during the sack. Its mention seems to show that the storm of Troy, including, no doubt, the violent removal of Cassandra by the hero of the drama from the sanctuary of Athena entered into the action. This seems to negative its identification with the play quoted by Cicero (See *Teucer*, post, p. 534).

The *Polyxena* (24) opens in a spirited manner with the apparition of Achilles—

469

Leaving the borders of the ooze—profound—
 Obscure—where sounds no pæan—barren streams
 Of Acheron, echoing shrill cries, I come !

Compare the Prologue to the *Hecuba* of Euripides. Again

471

Out of the gloom, out of the shadowy cloud

And these appear to belong to a dialogue between Agamemnon and Menelaus

473

An endless coat of ills investing thee

468

Do thou, abiding here, in Ida's land,
Gather Olympus' flocks, and sacrifice.

470

There is no leader of a multitude
Who can show favour, and suffice, to all ;
Since not even Zeus, whose sway is more than mine,
Could befriend all, whether he sent rain or sun,
But, if he came to judgment of mankind,
Would be condemned ; how then should I, being
mortal,
And of a mortal mother, be more knowing
Than Zeus, in goodness ?

XII. THE RETURNS FROM TROY

*Nauplius, Teucer, Eurysaces, Peleus, Women of Phthia, Chryses,
Aletes, Erigone, Tyndareus.*

There must have been about twelve plays in all, the *Electra* included, founded on incidents in the Returns of the Heroes from Troy, and their sequel. The *Nauplius* (25) introduces the old sea-rover, the father of the pilot Palamedes, lamenting the cruel fate of his gifted son, and preparing for the returning armament his terrible revenge (Hygin. 116). From the early part of the play may come

375

O Jove, who eapest grief !
O offerings of the third goblet, due
To saviour Jove !

The lines descriptive of the inventions of Palamedes are of great interest, and we may well rejoice that Achilles Tatius has preserved them ;

396

But this man found out how to build a wall
About the Argive host ; discovered weights,
Measures, and numbers ; he first fashioned these,
From one to ten, and then again from tens
Invented fifties, up to thousands ; he

Alone showed to the army how to give
 Signals by beacon, how to set a watch
 Over their sleep, and how to mark the hours
 Until the morning; and made manifest
 What had not been expounded; he traced out
 The spaces and the orbits of the stars,
 Each in his rank, and the celestial signs,
 And, for the shepherds of their ships at sea,
 The Dog's chill setting, and the Great Bear's round.

Nauplius proceeds, in another fragment of this play, to speak of the invention of games

381

And chequer-boards, ruled with five lines each way,
 And castings of the dice

The existence of this passage renders it less likely that the fragment of the Palamedes above given can be referred to this play. He concludes with an adjuration

383

And I invoke the all enshrouding Night

From the scene in which the wreck of the fleet was described must come

382

Hung downward, like a chaffinch in the snare

And from the conclusion of the play

377

To him who is unfortunate, one night
 Is equal to ten thousand; one in luck
 Should die, before the second.

Cicero (*Tusc. Disp.* III. 29) tries his hand at a translation of a passage in Sophocles, telling how Oileus, who had been consoling Telamon for the death of Ajax the Greater, himself refused consolation, when informed of the death of his own son, Ajax the Less. Stobæus has preserved the original, under the name of "Cedipus," which must be a mistake for "Oileus." This however, as in some other cases, must not be taken as the name of the play, or of the speaker. There is no reason to suppose Sophocles wrote an "Oileus." In the *Ajax Locrus*,

above quoted, it is difficult to suppose that Cicero's quotation could find place. Welcker refers it, accordingly, to the *Teucer* (26). Telamon, perhaps, is speaking.

14

Ay, and the greatest and most wise in mind
 You will discover to be just like him—
 Giver of good advice to one in trouble ;
 But when some Power alters the scale—strikes down
 Life's balance—for a man till then in fortune,
 His many excellent speeches are quite vanished.

Previous to this there must have been a description by Teucer of the catastrophe of the last play, and of the death of Ajax the Less ;

507

—and from Heaven

Came lightning, and through lightning thunder brake.

From the lament of Oileus we have

508

Alas, my child, how empty a delight
 I had of thee, hearing thee glorified
 As living ! But the Fury in the dark
 Was mocking at me, and I did not know
 That I had been deluded in my joy !

Finally Telamon drives Teucer forth, as hinted in the *Ajax* of our poet. A couplet has been preserved, without name of play or author, by Trypho (*Rhet. Gr.* VIII. 738), which is probably taken from his speech in deprecation of his father's wrath. The use of the third person may be compared with that suggested in the *Palamedes*, above, and the tone with that of Teucer's defence of his brother, in the *Ajax*.

But Teucer stayed the Phrygians, in mid leap
 Over the trenches, with his archery.

Whether there was, besides the *Teucer*, a *Eurysaces* (27) by Sophocles, appears questionable. Only one word is preserved to us under this title.

It is not easy to understand why Welcker should consider the *Peleus* (28) to be the same play with the *Women of Phthia*. Aristotle (*Poet.* c. 18) mentions the two plays, as belonging to the class which he calls "ethical." The *Peleus* deals with the return of Neoptolemus from

Troy, and the restoration of his grandfather to the throne of Epirus, from which he had been ousted by Acastus, his elder son by a mortal wife, whom he had married before Thetis. A female attendant prologizes

434

Sole housekeeper, I tend in his old age
And foster Peleus, son of Æacus,
Over again; for he who is growing old
Becomes a child once more.

This may be from the scene of the recognition of Neoptolemus by Peleus

442

O Zeus, do not deceive me; slay me not
Without a spear

The rest are hardly to be assigned:

439

And rubbing with dry unguent through the folds

436

'Tis better not to be, than to live ill.

Of the *Women of Phthia* nothing can be clearly ascertained. It may have been another version of the story of the sorrowful old age of Peleus, who was said by Callimachus to have died in exile at Cos. There are three fragments

622

You are a young man; you have much to learn,
And much to hear, and long to stay at school;
Try to be learning, ever, some new knowledge
That is of use.

623

—I'll be your tutor,
The aged, of the aged.

624

—The sentence of the parricide
Would have been called down on him.

The story of the *Chryses* (30) carries us again to the family of Pelops. According to Hyginus, 101, this Chryses was grandson of the Chryses in the *Iliad*, and son of Chryseis by Agamemnon. Orestes and Iphigenia take refuge with him, after their escape from Tauris, and are on the point of being delivered up to Thoas, when discovery is made by old Chryses of their relationship, which saves them. No fragment of interest has survived, except a line addressed to Hestia, as the "prow" or eminent object (?) of libations—an untranslatable metaphor.

Welcker identifies the *Aletes* (31) with the *Erigone*, and denies that any *Tyndareus* existed, separate from them. But he allows that there may have been two plays on the return of Orestes and Iphigenia to Greece, in one of which the scene may have been laid at Delphi, the plot embracing the recognition of Iphigenia by Electra, while the second dealt with the arrival at Argos, and the deposition and death of Aletes, the usurping son of Clytæmnestra and Ægisthus. But of the former of these nothing is extant, while of the scraps assigned to the *Erigone* nothing shows clearly whether Erigone of Argos, the sister of Aletes, is meant, or rather the more celebrated heroine of the Attic Swing Festival, the daughter of Icarius. This line is from the *Erigone*:

215

What I suspect, I wish to see for plain.

And there is one passage under the name of the *Tyndareus*, on the familiar Sophoclean topic:

572

'Tis never seemly to felicitate
The fortunes of a man, as prosperous,
Before his life shall have been lived by him
Completely through, and he have ceased to live.
For in a brief and scanty period
The assignment of an evil Deity
Destroys an all-pervading happiness,
When as things shift, and Heaven will have it so.

Stobæus gives us no less than seven fragments from the *Aletes*, the majority evidently drawn from a single scene, that of the "claim of title" set up by Orestes against Aletes. To the latter speaker belong—

91

If you are noble, as you call yourself,
Show us whose son you are, and whence you came;
No tale can throw a stain on generous breeding.

Orestes may reply

92

Well didst thou speak, not at all grievously.
For a fair ancestry, coming to proof,
Would obtain good repute, rather than blame.

88

An upright man, and of just sentiments,
Discerns far more than a philosopher.

Aletes breaks off with

89

Much wisdom often waits on brevity.

90

For he who loves to be for ever talking
Does not perceive he plagues his company.

This may possibly have been from a speech by an attendant, or by Tyndareus—

94

'Tis dreadful that the wicked—men who spring
From evil ancestors—should prosper well,
While those who are both good themselves, and born
From noble parents, are unfortunate.
Unmeet it was Deities should order so
These lines for mortals; meet it was, the pious
Should from the Gods have some clear benefit,
While those who are unrighteous underwent
Contrariwise to them, clear punishment,
In quittance for their sins; so, nobody
Of evil nature would be prosperous.

The last may be from the conclusion of the play:

93

Oh who would ever count men's happiness
As great, or little, or as that which none
Anywhere honour? For of all they have
Nothing abides the same!

XIII. STORIES FROM THE ODYSSEY

Nausicaa, The Phæacians, Syndeipni.

Of plays from the Odyssey, we must lament the total loss of the *Nausicaa* (33). This is the play in which, according to the well-known story, Sophocles acted the part of an attendant maiden, and distinguished himself as a ball-player. The princess calls her followers, with Homeric simplicity,

391

To wash our gowns and linen-petticoats !

We may assign to Ulysses, watching the game, the unplaced fragment

872

—and the missile rolls

Before my feet

Where the missile (or javelin) is, we are told, “a ball.” Envious Time, or the Caliph Omar, has robbed us of the rest of what may have been a very charming play.

The *Phæacians* (34) survives to us only in the punning lines on the name of Ulysses, of which the following perhaps is as good a rendering as they deserve

408

Rightly am I named *Odysseus*, after ills ;
For many *odious* to me I have *used* ill.

And in a passage from the narrative of Ulysses

407

To the Sirens, Phorcus' daughters, next I came,
Who chant the lays of Death.

From some further surviving indications it seems to have been a Satyric play.

We now come to the *Syndeipni* or *Feasters* (35) otherwise called *Syndeipnon*, or *The Dinner Party*. This I conclude, following Welcker, to have been a drama of importance, a tragedy, on the story of Ulysses and the Suitors of Penelope, as related in the 20th and following books of the Odyssey. It will be noticed that the addition of this play to the number of those on subjects taken from the Odyssey only makes up the total of this class to three ; a number which hardly justifies the remark above quoted, from the Life of Sophocles, as to the fondness of the poet for such subjects. But if for the Odyssey,

strictly so called, we substitute the adventures of Ulysses, generally speaking, many others would have to be added. The confusion of this drama with the *Achaëorum Syllogus* has arisen from the quotation by Athenæus (I. 17 D.), as from "Sophocles in the *Achæans' Syndeipnon*," of a well-known comical passage, founded on a Homeric incident, and partly taken from the *Osteologi* of Æschylus, which appears to have been a satyric drama on the fate of Melanthius and the maidservants. But lower down, (I. 17 F.) Athenæus classes Sophocles with Æschylus and Homer, as introducing "the suitors" in this connexion. The suitors of Penelope were naturally of Achæan race; but it is not necessary to hazard any further supposition, in this respect, than that Athenæus made a slip in quoting the title of the play. Ulysses is prologizing, apparently; he relates the events of his first encounter with Irus and the Suitors, and describes, with mock heroic irony, their maltreatment of him;

147

But in his wrath he hurled the unsavoury vase,
Nor missed me; and about my pate the vessel,
Breathing no scent of myrrh, brake, and my senses
Were routed by no friendly fragrance!

Of this passage part of the first line, and all the second, are found, as above noted, in a fragment of Æschylus. It does not seem likely that Sophocles would have transferred the incident to a different story. The topic reappears in an allusion made by Cicero, writing to his brother Quintus, who was at the time with Cæsar's army in Gaul. "Of your Sophoclean *Dinner Party* I do not think much; though I perceived you acted the play in fun." (Cic. *ad Qu.* 2. 16.) There had probably been some horse-play at the mess-table. Quintus Cicero was himself an amateur translator, and had turned four dramas into Latin, as the fruits of his winter-quarters' leisure; one of which, the *Erigone*, he sent to his brother; but it was lost on the way.

We find traces, next, of a spirited banquet scene; the Chorus sing

146

Hateful and slothful is forgetfulness
Of the Pierian maids;
But remembrance of song
Is most blest unto mortals,
Upholding the brief
Isthmus of life.

Ulysses taunts Eurymachus, perhaps ;

148

It is not right thus to be carrying round
A greasy chin—or that an o'ergrown boy,
Noble by birth, should be esteemed the son
Not of his father, but—his appetite !

And Antinous, perhaps, from an unnamed play

706

—you shine in raiment
That apes the woman !

Eurymachus may have replied

727

But you are kicking, like a well-fed colt ;
Your belly and jaws are full !

From the scene of the trial with the bow we have

149

Bring ye—let some one mingle and fill up
A mighty bowl. He, like a labouring steer,
Never will work, till after a good meal—

where again we have a Homeric incident reproduced ; and from the speech of some suitor, after Ulysses is made known, we get

155

You stick at nothing ! How the old Sisyphus
Is big and manifest in you everywhere,
And he, who was your mother's father.

A fragment of an uncertain drama must belong to the same scene

963

—for the bow
Is marvellous slippery

a scrap which appears almost conclusive as to the fact, that Sophocles did write a drama on this subject ; and thus renders it improbable

and unnecessary to ascribe these passages to the *Achæorum Syllogus*. Welcker adds, from the *Uncertain Fragments*, as taken from the final scene of this play,

869

In what a guise our executioner
Is gone !

819

Be silent ! hush ! What is that noise indoors ?

693

A hive of dead men buzzes, and I hear
A stir

XIV. THE LATER LIFE OF ULYSSES

Euryalus, Ulysses slain by a prickle.

Of the later life of Ulysses several stories are told, two of which, at least, were the subjects of Sophoclean Dramas. The plot of the *Euryalus* (37) we know from Parthenius, 3, but no fragments have survived. It is not worth repeating. The *Foot-bath*, or *Ulysses slain by a prickle* (36) probably opened with the return of Ulysses from his second wandering, and the recognition of him by Euryclea, in washing his feet, transferred from his first return, as told in the *Odyssey*. Then followed the landing of Telegonus, the son of Ulysses by Circe, and his encounter with his father, who is brought in wounded to death by the prickle of a sea-fish, with which the lance of Telegonus was pointed. There are several references to the oracle of Dodona, with which the singular prophecy of Tiresias in the *Odyssey* was somehow worked up.

401

Neither to Pytho nor Dodona's fields
Shall any man persuade me now to go.

Zeus dwelling in Dodona, at home with men.

The sooth-saying holy Dodonæan maids—

—and cause to cease the Power
Praised in Dodona—

403

—Wearing what sort of gift
Upon his gleaming shoulders ?

404

Bearing a winnowing fan upon his shoulders

402

If any man shall now come forth ; if not,
Say so.

Cicero tells us of a play by Pacuvius on the same subject, in which he finds matter for comparison unfavourable to Sophocles, from the Stoic point of view. Sophocles, it seems, made Ulysses lament too much over his wound, to suit the Roman taste.

With the death of the favourite character of our poet—Ulysses was introduced by him in more than a dozen plays—ends the series of fragments which can on authority or with any reasonable ground be assigned to particular tragedies.

XV. SATYRIC PLAYS

*Cedalion, Pandora, Hybris, Dionysiacus, Inachus, Hercules at
Tænarus, Cophi.*

There remain a few fragments ascribed to Satyric plays, on miscellaneous subjects. The *Cedalion* was a drama on the story of Orion (Erat. *Catasterism.* xxxii.). *Cedalion* was the slave of Vulcan, given by him to the blind giant to be his guide. He rode upon Orion's shoulders. The fragments are

305

Indeed my limbs have somewhat given way
Through panic!

A striking simile follows :

307

I gain no notion from your words, no more
Than a white paling from a whitened stone!

308

Whate'er may be forthcoming, the universe
Is a dream-shadow.

Abuse of slaves :

309

Food for the scourge—the goad—
Eaters of others bread!

The connexion of the first of the two following fragments with the story of *Pandora* is evident enough :

432

And first, begin to knead clay with your hands

The second implies a drinking scene :

429

And as he quaffs a brazen horn held high,
She, with her delicate arm, will coax the man
When he is full.

Hybris was, in one story, the name of the mother of Pan. We have of it

595

Lethe, that is destitute of all,
Dumb—voiceless.

From a play called *Dionysiacus*, or more probably, from “a Dionysiac play,” i.e. a satyric drama, we get

182

How did I come to find
A flower of grief so painless?

which refers, we are told, to the discovery of wine.

The *Inachus* was a Satyric play, of which the scenery and subject recalled the Golden Age;

267

Happy they, who then
Shared the immortal strain, divine

Arms are laid by as useless

269

And all are full of weaver-spiders.

278

Rough hoarseness rises from the tortoise-lyre.

272

—together with
Winter's returning shade

Mankind play games ; the cottabus especially

257

The splash of wine—the amorous, foreign game—
Sounded in every home

An anapæstic ode addresses Inachus, and describes the river named after him

256

O Inachus our ancestor !
Son of Oceanus, father of waters !
Who in lands of Argos art preeminent,
On Hera's hills,
And 'mongst Pelasgians in Etruria—
.

265

For he flows from Pindus' height,
From Lacmus, from Perrhæbia,
To Acarnania, to the Amphiloichi,
And mingles with the streams of Achelous.
.

Thence to Argos, dividing his wave,
He is come—to the Lyrcean folk.

Two lines of dialogue

255

—I assent ;

But know that, as the proverb runs, a man
Might become known from very small beginnings.

Iris is introduced by Hermes

261

What woman is here? A round Arcadian hat

Inachus is dried up : Io says

268

—and my father-river, Inachus,
Is in the same condition as the dead.

According to Toup, (*Emend. in Suid.* II. 464) Inachus, a rough old man crowned with reeds, Io, in heifer-form, Argus, all over eyes, Iris, Hermes, and similar figures may have been introduced, making up an entertainment not very unlike a popular burlesque on the modern stage.

The *Hercules at Tienarus* seems to have been a favourite play, on the subject of the descent of Hercules to Hades. Hercules says—

218

I gathered wood enough for cooking dinner,
So that I might not lack it half way through.

219

—they cherish in the land a snake,
The fountain's guardian.

The story, how snakes came to be the guardians of fountains, was told by Sophocles in another satyric drama, the *Cophi*, or *Dumb Men*, of which only the plot is preserved (*Ælian*, *N. A.* 6). Prometheus, who had given fire to mankind, was betrayed by his ungrateful beneficiaries; and in order to reward their treachery, Zeus gave them the drink of perpetual youth. With their usual stupidity, Mankind put it on an ass's back, and drove it before them: now the ass, being thirsty, came to a fountain, which was guarded by a serpent; and was easily persuaded by that crafty animal to barter the draught of youth for a draught of water. Thus the race of snakes obtained their peculiarity of an annual renewal of youth, while men and donkeys remain subject to thirst, and are, moreover, sometimes bitten by snakes, which produces a worse fever of thirst than any.

XVI. UNKNOWN DRAMAS.

The melancholy task remains of putting together such fragments as cannot even be attributed, by any probable conjecture, to one or other of the lost plays. Of these the largest harvest is afforded by Stobæus; but the value of his selection is lessened through his extravagant fondness for abstract remarks, which appear trite when detached from their context, on the general fitness or unfitness of things. Such are—

656

But stroke of God no mortal can evade.

657

Time, that uncovers all, brings all to light.

658

Much hidden wisdom is disclosed at last
By Time, to those who seek—
Time, and the strong extremity of life.

659

But when Heaven hides things heavenly, though thou
search
All nature through, thou canst not find them out.

660

One wise man perishes
At hands of many fools.

661

For a good man will succour the distressed.

662

But a good will is as a mighty god.

663

Yet the unprosperous are not deaf alone,
But seeing they see not what is manifest.

664

—There are no comely names
To fit uncomely deeds.

665

To take delight
In shameful pleasures is not ever right.

666

—Fortune does not side
With the despondent.

667

Why, modesty is no help in misery ;
For silence fights upon the accuser's side.

668

Why praise you this? For every man in wine
Is passion's captive, and devoid of sense;
And pouring out much babble, to no purpose,
Unwillingly has to hear the selfsame language
Which of free will he used.

669

But when a man is taken in a fraud
He must be dumb, however plausible.
The case is grievous, when a man of merit
Is conscious of some matter—.

More interest attaches to the following ;

670

So women, too, forswear the bitter pangs
Of child-bearing; but, when they cease from pain,
Become entangled in the selfsame toils,
O'ermastered by the presence of desire.

671

For that no oath sits heavy upon a knave.

673

Utter no secret! Bolts and bars are nothing.
That you may apprehend it easily,
No secret, on the tongue, does not slip off it.

674

For where the children overbear their sires
That is no city of sagacious men;

—It is good to follow
The customs of the country.

675

High place demands many high qualities:
But of small efforts no great glory ensues.

676

Opinions have more power than violence.

677

Though body is enslaved, yet mind is free.

679

But where's the household, among all mankind,
Ever was rich, though swoln with luxury,
Apart from a good woman's housewifery?

680

—for in a fatherless house
The woman has the spirit of a man.

Instead of Dindorf's (681), I read, with Brunck (859, Nauck),

Poverty, blended with impiety,
Utterly ruins and upsets a life.

682

O mortal race of men, and miserable,
How are we nothing, except shadow-like,
Drifting about, mere cumberers of the earth !

683

For 'tis not given, save to Gods, to live
With no misfortunes.

684

God ! surely there is no defence for men
From our innate and heaven-sent miseries.

This last is by some ascribed to Euripides.

686

But a wise gamester ought to take the dice
Even as they fall, and pay down quietly,
Rather than grumble at his luck.

687

For Hope is she who feeds the multitude—

688

The wise admit no dotage, in whose breast
Reason subsists, nurtured by God's own day ;
For forethought is great benefit to men.

The second line, here, is hardly Sophoclean.

689

For whoso in misfortunes longs for life
Is either cowardly, or insensible.

690

—Now he is dead, I long to die with him.
—Your day of fate will find you—never hasten.

Later investigations have added, from the same source,

839 (Nauck)

How want of knowledge is a parlous ill—

840 (Nauck)

—and folly

Is most of all akin to wickedness.

849 (Nauck)

The rightly happy must remain at home.

866 (Nauck)

Whatever mortal quails too much at death,
He is a fool ; this is in Destiny's keeping ;
And when his hour is come to die, though fleeing
Even to the courts of Jove, he cannot 'scape it.

868 *a* (Nauck)

But time obscures and brings to oblivion all.

Two lines come from the supplement of John of Damascus, (see also (736) quoted above).

691

Truth ever has most strength of what men say.

780

The gratitude of an unmindful man
Passes away.

Out of Photius, derived by him from Helladius Chrestomathius,
comes

694

A woman's vows I write upon the wave.

Athenæus affords a few good passages: among them are 420, 696,
698, quoted above. Also—

697

To get drunk—

Solace of care!

699

Courage! you have in me a mighty bar
To shut this terror out.

700

And a chorus of mute fish, wagging their tails,
Applauded their own mistress.

701

To be compelled to drink
Is just as bad as being compelled to thirst.

702

For though you offer to a thirsty man
All the wise saws in the world, you could not more
Delight him, than by giving him to drink!

703

—Thou accurst of Heaven,
Who with thy wine-jugs art so riotous!

704

And deep in my heart a daughter of Fear
Keeps revel, with no joyous cheer.

From the *Etymologicon Magnum* we have a characteristic passage;

705

But never yet the insolence of youth
Grew into soberness; but in the young
Blossoms and fades, blossoms and fades again.

Clement of Alexandria, from whose *Pædagogus* we derive 706 quoted above, gives us also, in his Miscellany (*Stromata*) four passages ascribed to Sophocles, one of them religious, monotheistic, if not Christian, in tone, and one an offensive fragment, written by no means in pure Greek. These I omit. The two others are also found, in part, in Plutarch, and may therefore be considered genuine.

707

And such, I know, is God; unto the wise
A giver, ever, of dark oracles;
But unto fools a sorry schoolmaster,
And of brief speech.

709

Before what Deity thou must appear...
Who knows not favour or benevolence,
But takes delight in right, and in right only.

Plutarch is a rich mine of Sophoclean fragments. Unluckily he never names the play from which he is quoting: but several have been assigned above, on probable grounds, to particular dramas. Others are—

710

Ye Gods, what passion, or what love-desires
Laid hold upon him!

711

Whoso has dealings with an emperor,
Becomes his slave, though he approach him free.

712

Matter for many bits, and rudders too!

714

Swift the conviction of adversity
To make its way—

715

Of all work, if a man begin it well,
'Tis like that the end also will be good.

716

Straits of the infernal regions, and back-swirl
Of the abyss—

717

—Profit is sweet, even if it spring from falsehood.
—The words of falsehood do not bring forth fruit.

I add the former of these two lines from Nauck's edition (749).

718

Men may be honoured, though unpropertied.
A beggar, if his mind is honourable,
Is none the worse—

720

For Ares, blind, O women, and seeing nought,
With a swine's snout routs up all miseries.

723

What can be taught, I learn; what can be found
I seek; the rest I did require of heaven.

725

Mourn you a mortal, now he is no more,
All ignorant if the future brings him gain?

726

Not honour, no, unhappy one! Disgrace
Rather, and maddening of your mind, were there!

728

Not harps—not lyres—with dirges will agree.

From the next line, ascribed to “Admetus in Sophocles”, it has been conjectured that our poet wrote an *Alcestis*, which has entirely perished ;

730

But my own house-cock summoned him to the mill—

This is said of Apollo : we cannot be far wrong in adding, with Welcker, from a Scholiast on Pindar,

758

O Land of Pheræ, hail ! O kindred fount,
Water of Hyperea ! Stream most dear
Unto the Gods !

which must belong to the same play ; but whether it was really an *Alcestis*, or rather a play on the fortunes of Apollo in Admetus’s service, I am inclined to doubt.

From Plutarch also come

732

Search all mankind—most of the hearts you search
Will be found base.

733

Purge bitter bile with bitter medicine.

734

I blame you not ; you speak ill, but act kindly.

735

Talk about running carries not so far
As to the course’s end.

737

A tardy onset, in the words of eld,
Hardly can penetrate a listening ear ;
Each, afar off, can see, but near, is blind.

738

Lovers of horses, drawers of bows of horn,
Wrestlers, with shields clanging like bells—

739

There was a first occurrence, once for all,
Of everything that had not yet occurred.

741

Men who have lost such friends as these are merry;
Men who have such, pray to be free from them.

742

—For arms, in poverty,
Shine brightly, and excel; but, as time passes,
A house enwrapped in sloth nods to its fall.

744

Persuasion hath an awful countenance.

745

The goose domesticated, and the dove,
Our house and hearth-mate—

746

For excellently even a differing speech
Works union twixt us two.

748

Blown high, like the hoar down of thistle-seed—

749

This is God's gift; what the Gods give, my child,
No man need ever shun.

783

Dragged it down, as a leaden weight the net.

879

Fair-fruited Cytherea—

And (not in Dindorf) .

755 (Nauck)

Fair words proceed not from a deed unfair.

From various sources, chiefly the notes of Scholiasts, we have—

750

—Let him not give counsel,

Who has not endured like me !

754

I shut my eyes, and open them, and stand up,
Not so much watched as watcher.

755

For though I have to choose one of the three
I will untie (the knot)That is, we are told, one way of suicide, either steel or halter, or
leaping from a rock.

756

Buying and selling—you propounded them
Like some Sidonian—some Phœnician pedlar!

757

’Tis the same corner of the soul of man
Where pain and pleasure both have being ; at least,
Happening on either fortune, he sheds tears.

759

—for Zeus already

On the supremest seat of Gods—

762

An old man’s wrath, like hatchet of soft iron
Whets on the hand, but gets blunt instantly.

763

For ever fairly fall the dice of Jove.

764

First I proclaim, let no ill words be uttered.

The line usually coupled with this Welcker attributes to the *Atræus*.
(See above, p. 517.)

766

—The sceptre-perching eagle,
Watch-dog of Jove—

768

So that Jove's forehead might grow smooth with joy.

769

For I was not his bastard brother,
But owned the same father as he, none other;
Zeus, and no mortal, was author of me.

770

I hate a searcher into mysteries.

772

—May the Sun pity me,
Whom the wise name progenitor of Gods,
And Sire of all things!

773

The friends of the unlucky are far away!

778

That city of seven gates thou call'st Thebes, where only
Do mortal mothers bring forth deities.

784

—A chatterbox
Of supreme cleverness, Laertes' son.

813

But bloody vengeance from above will dart—

822

I set aside the want of willingness.

823

For what is hidden purposely indoors
Ought never to be heard by those outside.

858

When a man sings in the Boeotian mood—

862

—for thy advice
Is mere old age.

865

—for effeminate men,
Practised in speaking—

884

'Tis better to incur some bane
Than pocket a disgraceful gain.

886

Thou, like a Lydian loadstone, didst draw hither
The steel from far.

902

You fawn, and bite ; you are a treacherous hound !

943

Thy Virgin Daughter's solemn mysteries.

I add, lastly, from Nauck's edition, five more passages from among the scanty gleanings which escaped previous researches.

682 (Nauck)

I offered to the Gods, upon the shore,
Lambs a year old.

738 (Nauck)

For that which Nature gives a man—
Pluck out that you never can.

804 (Nauck)

Hastening at the shuttle-songs
Which wake the sleeper up.

810 (Nauck)

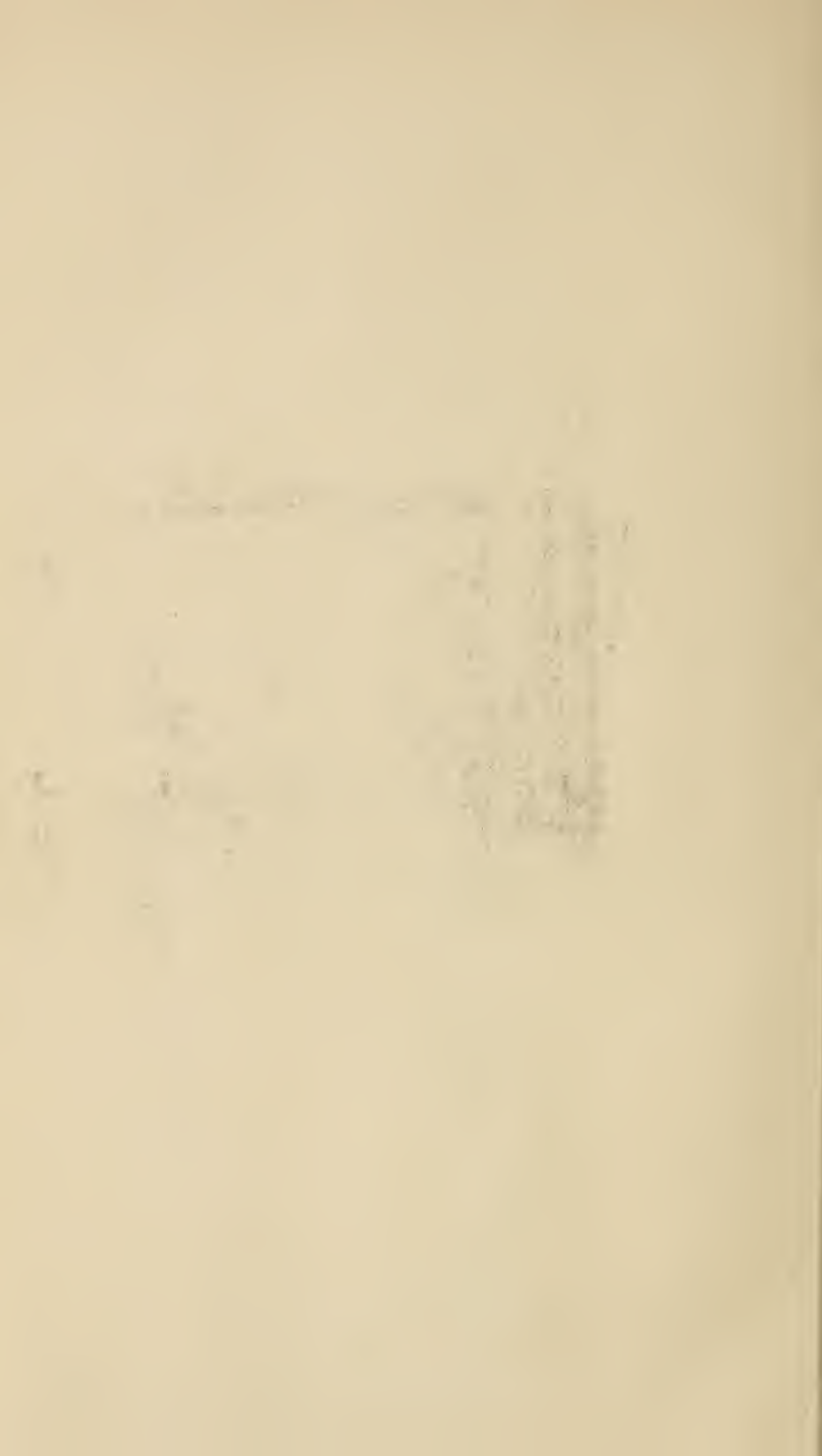
Would you were wise in deeds, as well as words!

818 (Nauck)

It were much better that we should proceed
With our hired horse, picked men, than with all arms.

Grace, vivacity and dramatic force are visible even in these comminuted splinters of poetic work. But very little of these characteristics can be reproduced by the translator, who labours, here, under insuperable difficulties.





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1888
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Sophocles
Dramas

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